

The  
RELATIONS  
of the  
SEXES



LEO TOLSTOY

# THE RELATIONS OF THE SEXES

BY  
LEO TOLSTOY

LONDON: THE C. W. DANIEL COMPANY  
Graham House, Tudor Street, E.C. 4

PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN BY  
Garnett, Mephram and Fisher, Limited  
112 Gloucester Road . . . Brighton

## EDITORIAL PREFACE.

---

IN selecting and publishing the contents of this book, the greater part of which consists of passages from Leo Tolstoy's private letters and diaries upon a subject often avoided in literature, or alluded to only indirectly, I do not conceal from myself that some readers will probably be shocked by the very frank and straightforward way in which this subject is treated here. In answer to their objections, I can only say that the book was not intended for them, but for those readers whose experience and observation have brought them to recognise the world-wide need of a serious, free, and unrestricted examination of this most vitally important problem of human life.

I am also aware that other readers, on the contrary, may be attracted to this book from a prurient curiosity; but I am glad to think that so far from obtaining what they expect, they can, in this case at least, only be morally benefited by the healthy character of the views they will here become acquainted with, perhaps for the first time.

As to those who are equally free from artificial prudery, and impure curiosity, and who will approach the subject with the sole desire of a careful and reverent investigation of one of the most essential and complex life problems, I need say nothing. They know what they are about, and I earnestly trust, will find what they are in search of.

In the interests of those who would not like a book of

this kind to get into the hands of readers whom they consider too young to understand it, a title as direct and unambiguous as possible has been chosen.

After the appearance of *The Kreutzer Sonata*, so misunderstood and misjudged by some readers, hundreds of letters from persons of all grades of society in every part of the globe reached the author, thanking him for the good the book had done them, relating most intimate circumstances in their past lives, and begging for further guidance in their particular difficulties. This correspondence vividly demonstrated anew, if any new demonstration were required, that the old basis of relationship is outworn and a new one more in accordance with the enlarged consciousness of Christendom is being earnestly sought for, as indeed Tolstoy points out in one of the passages here quoted. Many of the extracts included in this collection are taken from Tolstoy's replies to these letters, and the sole reason for the publicity now given to these and other thoughts expressed here, is the hope that they may bring light and help to thousands more who are in the same difficulties, but cannot be reached by personal means.

With regard to the kind of compilation of a writer's thoughts which the present book represents, I feel it necessary to make a few further general observations. Such a collection, although relating to one definite subject, yet being gathered from the most varied sources, and expressing most different frames of mind and periods of inner development,—naturally cannot offer that completeness, consecutiveness, and sense of proportion one is accustomed to expect from a carefully elaborated literary production. To a superficial or hostile reader, or one unacquainted with the basis of the author's life-conception, or who has never seriously contemplated the subject discussed,—such compilations will inevitably afford many seeming contradictions and inconsistencies ;

especially if the author be indeed a thinker, *i.e.*—a man with an understanding of life which is not stationary but progressive. There is, however, another class of readers,—and it is those we have in view when publishing these booklets,—who seriously and sincerely approach the problem under consideration, not with the desire to maintain at all costs their previous personal views, but solely to investigate it impartially, and, should the Truth demand it, to alter or modify their original attitude. Such readers, penetrating into the very essence of the thoughts expressed, will not be disturbed by any verbal inaccuracies or purely external contradictions of expression,—which are inevitable owing to the very character of such compilations, composed of fragmentary and isolated thoughts in most cases not originally intended for publication at all. And such readers only, who endeavour to grasp the author's meaning, not in its worst but in its best and most useful significance, can obtain from their reading true satisfaction and real profit.

Thus, for example, in the present book one meets with passages in which marriage is positively recommended,—side by side with others expressing an altogether negative attitude. And nevertheless in these two different views on marriage there is no contradiction if one takes into consideration the author's recognition of the different degrees of development of human consciousness. Already in the *Afterword to the Kreutzer Sonata*, with which this book begins, the correlation of these two views is sufficiently clearly indicated for the discriminating reader. Some years after this article had been written, Leo Tolstoy having been asked in my presence how he reconciled the two assertions, answered to the following effect: "Both are true: all depends on the plane on which a man finds himself. If overcome by the irresistible longing for married life, then instead of living dissolutely or becoming addicted to unnatural vices, he had certainly better marry, in order,

## 8      The Relations of the Sexes

conjointly with his partner, to fulfil his family and social duties. But if he or she is capable of entire consecration to the service of God and men, forgetting personal individuality in the service, then marriage is undoubtedly a fall and a hindrance, just as it would be a hindrance for people who formerly had been working in a field with all their members free, to rope themselves together in pairs." With equal simplicity all other doubts and misgivings which may arise while reading the following pages will be solved, I believe—if the reader indeed *desires* their solution.

To avoid undesirable misunderstandings I should like to make it clear that when alluding to woman in unflattering terms Tolstoy refers exclusively to worldly, materialistic women, and that the very vehemence of his protest is the proof of his sense of the supreme importance, dignity, and influence for good of the true woman of Christian spirit.

I feel it my duty also to repeat the remark made when issuing similar compilations,—that the responsibility for the mutual order of the passages inserted here lies on me alone, as the author, when expressing the thoughts on various occasions, did not contemplate their ultimate collection into one group, although he gave me permission to make use of them entirely at my discretion.

As for myself and my colleagues in this work, we undertake each new issue of such collections of Tolstoy's thoughts with so much the greater satisfaction and pleasure, that we know from the expressions of sympathy and encouragement which reach us on all sides to what an extent these publications do indeed satisfy a heartfelt demand on the part of many and many of our readers.

V. TCHERTKOFF.

CHRISTCHURCH, 15th *August*, 1901.

# The Relations of the Sexes.

---

## Afterword to "The Kreutzer Sonata."

I HAVE received and continue to receive letters from strangers, asking me to explain in simple and clear language my ideas on the subject treated by me in the story entitled *The Kreutzer Sonata*. This I will now endeavour to do, that is, to express as shortly as possible the substance of what I wished to convey in that story, and those deductions which may, in my opinion, be drawn from it.

In the first place I wished to say that there is a settled conviction, which has taken root in all classes of our society, and is supported by false science, that sexual intercourse is indispensable to health, and that, as the marriage state is not always practicable, sexual intercourse outside of marriage, imposing on the man no obligation beyond a money payment, is perfectly natural, and therefore deserving of encouragement.

This conviction has become so general and confirmed that parents encourage vice among their children by the advice of medical men; governments—whose only meaning consists in care for the moral well-being of the citizens—organise vice, *i.e.*, regulate an entire class of women who are doomed to bodily and spiritual ruin for the satisfaction of the imaginary necessities of men; and unmarried men addict themselves to vice with perfectly quiet consciences.

And I wished to say that this is wrong, because it cannot be necessary that for the sake of the health of some the souls and bodies of others must be ruined, any more than it can be necessary that for the health of some the blood of others must be drunk.

The deduction which seems to me natural to make from this is, that one should not give way to this error and deception. And in order not to give way, one should first refuse to believe immoral teachings, however they may be supported by pseudo sciences; and, secondly, understand that the entering into such sexual intercourse, in which men free themselves from its possible consequences—children—and cast the whole burden of these consequences on the women, who take means to artificially prevent birth—that such sexual intercourse is a transgression of the plainest demands of morality, is dastardly; and that therefore unmarried men who do not wish to live as dastards must abstain from this.

If men would practise continence, they must lead a natural life, neither drinking wine nor over-eating, not eating meat, nor shirking labour (not gymnastics, but real, exhausting labour), and must never admit to themselves the possibility of intercourse with strange women any more than a man does in relation with his mother, sisters, near relatives, or the wives of friends. Every man will find around him hundreds of instances to prove that continence is not only possible, but less dangerous and hurtful to health than incontinence.

This in the first place.

Secondly, in consequence of the view existing in our fashionable society that sexual intercourse is not only a necessary condition of health and a pleasure, but also a poetical and elevated blessing of life, conjugal infidelity has now become a most ordinary phenomenon in all ranks of society (among the peasantry chiefly owing to the military service).

And I think that this is wrong; and the conclusion which follows from this is that these evils should be avoided.

And in order to avoid them it is necessary that the view of sexual love should be changed, that men and women should be educated, both by their parents and by public opinion, to look upon falling in love and the sexual affec-

tion connected with it, both before and after marriage, not as a poetical, elevated condition, as at present, but as an animal condition degrading to man. And that a violation of the marriage promise of fidelity should be censured by public opinion at least as severely as violations of monetary obligations and commercial frauds, and not extolled as it is now in novels, verses, songs, operas, etc.

This in the second place.

Thirdly, in consequence again of this false significance attributed to sexual love, the production of children has lost its meaning in our society. Instead of being the aim and justification of conjugal relations, it has become an impediment to the pleasurable extension of amative intercourse. And thus, by the advice of professors of the healing art, the employment of means for depriving the woman of the power of bearing children has become more and more general both within and outside marriage; and what was formerly, and in patriarchal peasant families still is, unknown—the continuance of conjugal relations during pregnancy and nursing—has become an accepted custom.

And I believe that this is wrong.

It is wrong to employ means to prevent childbirth: firstly, because it liberates people from those cares and anxieties about their children which constitute the redeeming feature of sexual love; and, secondly, because it is closely akin to an act most revolting to the human conscience—manslaughter. And incontinence during pregnancy and nursing is wrong because it destroys the physical and, above all, the spiritual powers of the woman.

The deduction which ensues is that this should be avoided. And in order to avoid it, one should understand that continence, which is an indispensable condition of human dignity in the unmarried state, is still more essential in the married one.

This in the third place.

Fourthly, in this society, in which children are considered either an impediment to enjoyment or an unfortunate accident, or else a means of pleasure when only a certain predetermined number are born, these children are brought up, not to face those problems of human life which await them as reasonable and loving

beings, but only with a view to the gratification they may afford their parents. Consequently the children of men are brought up like the young of animals, the chief care of the parents being, not to prepare them for activities worthy of human beings, but (and in this the parents are supported by a pseudo-science termed Medical) to over-feed them, to increase their size, and to make them clean, white, plump and handsome. (If this is not so among the lower classes, it is only owing to their inability to carry it out; the point of view is the same.) And in these pampered children, as in all over-fed animals, an unconquerable sexual sensitiveness appears unnaturally early, causing them terrible suffering when they attain youth. Clothes, books, sight-seeing, music, dancing, dainty fare, all the accessories of life, from pictures on boxes to stories, novels, and poems, still further heighten this sensitiveness, the result being that most dreadful sexual vices and diseases are frequent conditions of the growth of young people of both sexes, often remaining in maturity.

And I believe that this is wrong.

The deduction which may be drawn is that human children should cease to be educated like the young of animals; that in the education of human children other results should be aimed at than a handsome, pampered body.

This in the fourth place.

Fifthly, in our society, where the falling in love of young men and women (having, after all, sexual attraction as its basis) is considered the highest poetical aim of human aspiration — (witness all the art and poetry of our society) — young people devote the best part of their lives — the men to searching for, finding, and taking possession of the best objects of affection for free union or marriage; the women and girls to alluring and enticing men into free connexions or marriage.

In this way the best powers of men are wasted on labour which is not only unproductive but injurious. Thus also originates a great part of the senseless luxury of our lives; from this proceed the idleness of the men and the shamelessness of the women, who, following fashions admittedly borrowed from depraved women, do not hesitate to display the parts of their bodies which excite sensuality.

And I believe that this is wrong.

It is wrong, because the attainment of union with the object of one's love—whether with or without marriage, however idealised it may be in poetry and romance—is an aim as unworthy of man as that of procuring for oneself dainty and abundant fare, which to many people appears the supreme good.

The deduction that may be drawn from this is that men should cease to regard sexual love as something especially elevated, and should understand that of all the aims worthy of man, whether it be the service of humanity, of one's country, of science or of art (not to speak of the service of God)—whatever it be, not one is attained by union with the object of one's love, either with marriage or without; on the contrary, that falling in love, and union with the object of one's love never facilitates, but always impedes the attainment of any aim worthy of man (however verse or prose may seek to prove the opposite).

This in the fifth place.

That is the substance of what I wished to say, and thought I had expressed in my story; and it seemed to me that though one might argue about the means of rectifying the evil pointed out by these considerations, it was quite impossible not to agree with the considerations themselves.

It appeared impossible not to agree—firstly, because these considerations are entirely in accordance with the progress of humanity—which is always advancing from dissoluteness to greater and greater purity—with the moral consciousness of society, and with one's own conscience, which always condemns indulgence and appreciates chastity\*, and, secondly, because these considerations are merely inevitable deductions from the Gospel teaching which we either profess, or at least recognise, though unconsciously, as the basis of our ideas of morality.

But it turned out I was wrong.

No one, it is true, directly disputes these considerations, which affirm that depravity is unnecessary before as well as after marriage, that one should not artificially prevent childbirth, nor make toys of children, nor esteem physical

\* The original Russian word, here translated "chastity" for want of a nearer equivalent, implies complete abstinence from sexual intercourse, and in this sense the English word should be understood.

—*Trans.*

union above everything else—in short, no one disputes that chastity is better than depravity. But, it is said, "If abstinence be better than marriage, it is evident men should follow the better course. But if they do, then the human race will cease—and the ideal of the human race cannot be extinction."

The extinction of the human race is not a new idea to men of our time, however. It is an article of faith with religious people, and with scientists an inevitable deduction from observations on the cooling of the sun. Not to speak of this, however, there is in the objection a great, widespread, and ancient misunderstanding. It is said, "If man attains to the ideal of perfect chastity, he will be exterminated :—therefore, this ideal is incorrect." But those who argue thus, either intentionally or unintentionally confound two different things—a rule or precept, and an ideal.

Chastity is not a rule or a precept, but an ideal, or rather one of the conditions of the ideal. And an ideal is only really an ideal when its attainment is possible only as an idea, when it appears attainable only in infinity, and when, therefore, the possibility of approaching it is infinite. If the ideal were attained, or even if we could picture it to ourselves as attained, it would cease to be an ideal.

Such is Christ's ideal,—the establishment of the Kingdom of God upon earth ; an ideal already foretold by the prophets, when they declared that a time was approaching when all men should be taught of God, when they should turn swords into ploughshares and spears into pruning hooks, when the lion should lie down with the lamb, and all beings should be united in love. The whole meaning of human life consists in progress towards this ideal ; and, therefore, the aspiration towards the Christian ideal in all its fulness, and towards chastity as one of its conditions, not only does not exclude the possibility of life ;—on the contrary, the absence of this Christian ideal would destroy progress, and, therefore, the possibility of real life.

The argument that the human race would cease were men to strive with all their might after chastity, is like the one which might be adduced, as in fact it is, that the human race would perish if men were to strive with all

their might towards the realisation of love towards friends, enemies, and every living creature, instead of continuing the struggle for existence. Such arguments originate in people who fail to understand the difference between two methods of moral guidance.

As there are two methods of indicating the way to a traveller, so also are there two methods of moral guidance for the seeker after truth. One consists in directing the attention of the traveller towards objects he will have to meet, and in shaping his course by these landmarks. The other method consists in giving the man merely a general direction on the compass he carries with him, upon which he sees always one invariable direction, and, therefore, every deviation he may make.

The first method of moral guidance consists in externally defined rules : certain definite precepts of conduct are given to a man as to what he should or should not do. "Keep the Sabbath," "Observe circumcision," "Steal not," "Abstain from wine," "Slay no living creature," "Give tithes to the poor," "Wash and pray five times a day," "Baptise," "Observe Holy Communion," and so forth. Such are the external ordinances of religious teachings: Brahminism, Buddhism, Mahometanism, Judaism, and Ecclesiasticism (falsely called Christianity).

The other method consists in indicating a perfection never attainable by man, but the aspiration towards which he is conscious of: an ideal is indicated, the measure of his deviation from which man can always see.

"Love God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and thy neighbour as thyself."  
"Be ye perfect, as your Father in Heaven is perfect."

Such is the teaching of Jesus.

The test of the fulfilment of external religious teachings is the conformity of conduct to precept; and such conformity is possible.

The test of the fulfilment of Christ's teaching is the consciousness of our failure to approach the ideal perfection. (The degree of approach is not perceptible; only the deviation from perfection is seen.)

The man who professes to obey the external law is like a man standing in the light of a lantern fixed to a post. He stands in the light of this lantern; it is light around him, but he has no place towards which to

advance. The man who professes Christ's teaching is like a man carrying a lantern before him; the light is ever ahead, and ever impels him to follow it, continually revealing new illuminated prospects attracting him onward.

The Pharisee thanks God that he fulfils the whole law. The rich young man had also fulfilled all from his childhood, and cannot understand what yet he lacks. Nor could they think otherwise; nothing was before them towards which they might aspire. Tithes were paid, Sabbaths observed, parents honoured; adultery, theft and murder avoided. What more?

For him who professes the Christian teaching, the attainment of each step towards perfection imposes the necessity of stepping to the next, whence a still higher is revealed,—and so on without end.

He who professes the law of Jesus is always in the position of the publican. Unceasingly conscious of imperfection, not looking back at the way he came, but ever forward along the way yet to be trodden and not yet mastered.

In this consists the difference between Christ's teaching and all other religious teachings, a difference not of claims, but of methods of guidance.

Jesus gave no definitions of life. He established no institutions, neither marriage nor any other. But men, not understanding the peculiarities of his teaching, accustomed to external teaching, and desirous of feeling themselves justified—as the Pharisee felt himself justified—have from the letter of Christ's teaching, but in direct opposition to its whole spirit, constructed an external system of rules known as Church doctrine, and by this teaching they have displaced Christ's true doctrine of the ideal.

Church doctrines—self-styled Christian, have substituted external definitions and rules in relation to all the phenomena of life, in the place of Christ's teaching of the ideal, and contrary to the spirit of his teaching. This has been done with reference to governments, law, war, the Church, and worship. It has also been done in relation to marriage. In spite of the fact that Jesus not only never established marriage, but, so far as external ordinances go, rather discountenanced it ("Leave thy wife and

follow me")—Church teachings, self-styled Christian, have established marriage as a Christian institution; that is, they have defined the external conditions under which sexual love, as they assert, may become perfectly sinless and quite lawful for a Christian.

As the institution of marriage has no basis whatever in the true Christian teaching, however, it has come to pass that men to-day have quitted one shore without reaching the other: they do not believe in the ecclesiastical definition of marriage as matter of fact, feeling that it has no foundation in Christian teaching; and as they have not yet discovered Christ's ideal—the aspiration towards complete chastity—they remain in relation to marriage, quite without guidance. Hence has resulted the seemingly strange circumstance, that among Jews, Mahometans, Lama-ists, and others, professing religious teachings of a much lower standard than the Christian, but having strict external definitions of marriage, the family principle and conjugal fidelity are incomparably firmer than with so-called Christians. The former have a regular system of concubinage, polygamy, or polyandry, confined within certain limits. Among us wholesale dissoluteness, concubinage, polygamy and polyandry exist, subject to no limits, and concealed under the appearance of monogamy.

It is only because the clergy, for money, perform a certain rite called ecclesiastical marriage, over a certain number of those joined together, that men to-day naively or hypocritically imagine they are living under monogamy.

There cannot be, and never has been, Christian marriage, any more than Christian worship (Matthew vi. 5-12; John iv. 21), nor Christian teachers and fathers of the Church (Matthew xxiii. 8-10), nor Christian property, nor a Christian army, nor law-courts, nor government.

And so it was always understood by the Christians of the first and succeeding centuries.

The Christian's ideal is love to God and to one's neighbour; it is the renunciation of self for the service of God and one's neighbour. Whereas sexual love, marriage, is service of self, and therefore in any case, an obstacle to the service of God and man; consequently, from a Christian point of view, a fall, a sin.

Entering into marriage relations cannot assist the service of God and man, even although the persons so related were to have as their object the life of the human race; it would be far simpler for such persons to sustain and save those millions of children perishing around us for want of material—not to mention spiritual—food, instead of entering into marriage for the production of new young lives.

A Christian could enter into marriage without the consciousness of a fall, a sin, only if he could see and know that all the existing children were provided for.

One may refuse to accept Christ's teaching—that teaching which has penetrated our whole life, and upon which all our morality is founded; but, if we accept it, we cannot but recognise that it points to the ideal of complete chastity.

In the gospel it is said clearly and without the possibility of any misinterpretation, firstly, that a husband should not divorce his wife in order to take another but should live with the one to whom he has been united (Matthew v. 31, 32; xix. 8); secondly, that for man in general, and, therefore, both for the married and unmarried ones, it is sinful to look upon woman as an object of pleasure (Matt. v. 28, 29); and thirdly, that for an unmarried man it is better not to marry at all, that is to say, to be perfectly chaste (Matt. xix. 10-12).

To very many these thoughts will appear strange and even contradictory. And they are indeed contradictory, though not among themselves; they contradict our whole life; and the question involuntarily arises, Which are right—these thoughts, or the lives lived by millions of people, myself among them? This feeling was experienced by me in the most intense degree when I was being drawn to the convictions I now express. I never expected that the development of my thoughts would lead me to the conclusions to which I have come. I was startled by these conclusions. I did not wish to believe them; but not to believe was impossible. And however much they contradict the whole tenor of our life, however much they contradict my own former thoughts and even expressions, I was obliged to accept them.

“But all these are general considerations which, while they may be true, relate to the teaching of Jesus, and

only bind those who profess it ; but life is life, and, having indicated the unattainable ideal of Jesus, one cannot leave men in one of the most burning problems of the universe, productive of the greatest calamities, with no other guidance than this one ideal.

"A young and passionate man at first will be attracted by this ideal, but he will not hold out ; he will give way, and, neither knowing nor admitting any *rules*, he will fall into complete depravity."

So people generally argue.

Christ's ideal is unattainable, and cannot, therefore, serve as a guide in life. We may talk of it, dream of it, but it is not applicable to life, and must, therefore, be abandoned.

What we want is not an ideal, but a guidance corresponding to our strength, to the average level of the moral forces of our society : an honest ecclesiastical marriage ; or even a not entirely honest marriage, as when one of the parties (in our society generally the male) has already known other women ; or civil marriage ; or even marriage with the possibility of divorce ; or even (advancing in the same direction) a Japanese marriage for a certain term ; and why not go as far as brothels ? which are, it is maintained, better than immorality in the streets.

The misfortune is just this, that, having once allowed oneself to lower the ideal to suit one's weakness, the line at which one should stop cannot be drawn.

But such reasoning is false from the beginning. First of all it is false that the ideal of infinite perfection cannot be a guide in life ; and it is also false that I must either despair and say "I must give it up ; it is of no use to me as I can never attain to it" ; or must lower the ideal to the level to which, in my weakness, I wish to stay.

The mariner who should say to himself, "Because I cannot advance in the direction indicated by the compass, I will throw it overboard or cease to look at it" (*i.e.*, reject the ideal); or else, "I will fasten the needle in the position corresponding to the direction in which my ship is now advancing" (*i.e.*, will lower the ideal to my weakness), would be reasoning in the same way.

The ideal of perfection given by Jesus is neither a fancy, nor a subject for rhetorical sermons, but it is the

most indispensable guide, accessible to every one, for the moral life of men,—just as the compass is the indispensable and accessible instrument for the guidance of the mariner. But the one must be believed as much as the other.

In whatever position a man may find himself, the teaching of the ideal given by Jesus is always sufficient to provide the surest indication of what he should and should not do. But he must believe this teaching entirely, this teaching alone; he must cease to believe all others; just as the mariner must believe in the compass and desist from guiding himself by what he sees on either hand.

One must know how to guide oneself by Christ's teaching as completely as by the compass; and to this end it is above all necessary to realise one's position. We must not be afraid of defining exactly our deviation from the given ideal direction. On whatever level a man may stand there is always the possibility of his approaching the ideal; and there is no position in which he can say, "It is attained," and that there is nothing beyond to strive towards.

Such is man's aspiration towards the Christian ideal in general, and towards chastity in particular. If we imagine to ourselves men in the most diverse positions in relation to the sex-question, from innocent childhood to incontinent marriage, the teaching of Jesus, and the ideal he presents to us, will always serve as a clear and definite guide as to what a man should or should not do, on each of the steps between the two.

"What should a pure lad or girl do?" Keep themselves pure and free from temptation, and in order to give all their powers to the service of God and man, strive towards greater and greater purity of thought and desire.

"What should the young man or girl do who has fallen into temptation, is absorbed in objectless thoughts of love, or in love for a particular person, and has thereby lost to a certain extent their possibility of serving God and man?"

Exactly the same; not allow themselves to fall into sin (knowing that a fall will not free them from temptation, but only render it stronger), and strive after greater and greater purity, that they may be enabled more fully to serve God and man.

"What should those do who have not resisted temptation and have fallen?"

Consider their fall not as a legitimate enjoyment (as it is now regarded, when justified by the ritual of marriage), nor as a casual pleasure which one may repeat with others, nor as a calamity when the fall has taken place with an inferior and without ritual; but regard this first fall as the only one, as an entry into actual and indissoluble marriage.

This entry into marriage, with the birth of children as a result, restricts those who enter it to a new and more limited form of service of God and man. Before marriage they could serve God and man directly, in the most various ways; entry into marriage restricts the scope of their activities, and demands of them the rearing and education of the children, the future servants of God and man.

"What should a married man and woman do who are fulfilling the restricted service of God and man by rearing and educating their children?"

Again the same—together strive to free themselves from temptation, to purify themselves and cease the sin by changing the relations which hinder both general and special service of God and man—changing sexual love into the pure relationship of brother and sister.

And therefore it is not true that we cannot guide ourselves by the ideal of Jesus, because of its being so high, perfect and unattainable. We cannot be guided by it merely because we lie to ourselves and deceive ourselves. Indeed, by saying that we must have rules more practicable than the ideal of Jesus, because otherwise, not having attained this ideal, we shall fall into sin,—we really say not that the ideal of Jesus is too high for us, but only that we do not believe in it, and do not wish to regulate our conduct by it.

By saying that having once fallen we have thereby begun a loose life, we really only say that we have decided beforehand that to fall with one who is socially our inferior is not a sin but an amusement, an infatuation, which we are not bound to rectify by what we call marriage. Whereas, if we understood that such a fall is a sin which must and can be redeemed only by an indissoluble marriage, and by all the activities involved in educating the children born of marriage, then the fall

would not be by any means a reason for plunging into vice.

If a farmer who is learning to sow corn were to leave the field he has sown badly, and after having tried his skill unsuccessfully in a second and third place were to recognise as sown land only the one successful field, it is evident such a man would waste much land and seed, and would not learn to sow properly. Only acknowledge chastity as the ideal, and regard every fall, no matter whose it may be, or with whom, as the one irrevocable life-long marriage, and it will be clear that the guidance given by Jesus is not only sufficient, but is the only possible guidance.

"Man is weak; he must be given a task proportioned to his strength," people say. This is like saying, "My hand is weak and I cannot draw a perfectly straight line, (the shortest between two points), and therefore, to help myself to trace a straight line, I will take as my model a crooked or broken line."

The weaker my hand the more perfect model do I require.

Having heard the Christian teaching of the ideal we cannot act as if we were ignorant, and replace it by external ordinances. The Christian teaching of the ideal has been revealed to man just because it can guide him in his present stage of development. Humanity has already outgrown the period of external religious ordinances; no one believes in them any more.

The Christian teaching is the only teaching that can guide mankind. We cannot, we must not, replace Christ's ideal by external rules; but we must firmly keep this ideal before us in all its purity, and above all we must believe in it.

To those on a ship sailing near the land one could say, "Keep to that cliff, that cape, that tower," and so forth. But the time has come when the ship has left the land behind, and those on board must and can be guided only by the unattainable stars and the compass, which indicate the direction.

And both are given us.

\*

\*

\*

\*

\*

## "Diana."

Amongst other letters which I have received from various quarters in connection with *The Kreutzer Sonata* and the *Afterword*, which demonstrate that the necessity of reforming the view on the relations between the sexes is felt not by me alone but by a great number of thinking men and women,—whose voices are unheard and unnoticed only because they are stifled by the cries of the crowd defending with heat and tenacity the customary order of things ministering to their passions,—amongst these letters I received, on the 7th October, 1890, one enclosing a pamphlet entitled *Diana*.

This is the letter: "We have the pleasure of sending you a little pamphlet entitled '*Diana*: a psycho-physiological essay on sex-relations, for married men and women,' which we hope you will receive. Since your work, *The Kreutzer Sonata*, appeared in America, many people say '*Diana* explains, fulfils, and renders possible the theories of Tolstoy.' We therefore take the liberty of sending you this pamphlet in order that you may judge for yourself. Praying for the fulfilment of the desire of your heart, We are, Yours sincerely, (signed) THE BURNS COMPANY, New York."

Prior to this I had received from France a letter from Angèle Francoise, and her pamphlet. In her letter she informed me of the existence of two societies which aim at encouraging purity in sexual matters, one in England and the other in France (*Societe d'amour pur*). In Madame Angèle's pamphlet the same thoughts are expressed as in *Diana*, but less clearly and definitely and with a tinge of mysticism.

The ideas expressed in *Diana*, although having at their foundation not a Christian but rather a pagan, platonic life conception, are so novel and interesting, and demonstrate so obviously the unreasonableness of the current looseness in unmarried as well as in married life in our

society that I should like to share them with the reader.

The essential idea of the pamphlet, which has for motto the words, "and they twain shall be one flesh," is as follows:—

The difference between male and female organisms exists not only physiologically, but also in other and moral qualities, which in man are called manliness, and in woman womanliness. The attraction between the sexes is founded not merely on the tendency towards physical union, but also on the mutual attraction which these opposite qualities produce: womanliness on the man and manliness on the woman. One sex tends to complete itself by the other; and therefore the attraction between the sexes produces equally a tendency towards spiritual and towards physical communion. The tendency towards these different kinds of communion are two manifestations of one and the same power, and they are in such dependence on each other that the satisfaction of the one always weakens the other. In so far as the propensity towards spiritual communion is satisfied the propensity towards physical union weakens, or becomes completely extinguished, and *vice versa*: the satisfaction of the physical propensity weakens or destroys the spiritual. And, therefore, the attraction between the sexes is not only physical, resulting in children, but is a mutual attraction which can take the form of any entirely spiritual communion, in thought alone, of an entirely animal communion resulting in the birth of children, and of the most varied gradations between them. The question upon which of these steps the mutual approach between the sexes will cease is decided by the kind of communion the partners regard for the time being or for ever, as good, right, and therefore desirable. A remarkable illustration of the extent to which the relation of the sexes can be subordinated to the conception of what is good, right, and desirable is to be found in the custom existing in Little Russia of young couples engaged to be married passing their nights together for years without infringing their virginity.

The complete satisfaction of separate individuals who are uniting is attained on that stage which they regard as good, right, and therefore desirable, and which depends

on their personal view. But independently of this, objectively, for all, one stage of intercourse must give more satisfaction than another. What intercourse, then, gives the greatest satisfaction in itself for all, independently of the personal view of those uniting: that which approaches the spiritual, or the physical? The answer, clear and positive, although contradicting all that we are accustomed to believe in our society, is, that the nearer the intercourse to the merely physical phase, the more is desire excited, and the less is satisfaction attained.

The nearer to the opposite (the spiritual extreme), the less is new desire elicited and the fuller is the satisfaction. The nearer to the former (the physical) the more is it destructive to the powers of life: the nearer to the latter (the spiritual) the more peaceful, joyful, and stronger is the general condition.

The union of man and woman into "one flesh" in the form of indissoluble monogamy the author regards as a necessary condition of the higher development of man. Marriage therefore according to the author's opinion, while presenting a natural and desirable state for all who have attained maturity, is not necessarily a physical union but may also be a spiritual one only. In accordance with circumstances and temperament, and above all with that which those uniting regard as right, good and desirable, marriage, for some, will approach nearer to spiritual intercourse, for others to physical; but the more intercourse approaches the spiritual, the fuller the satisfaction.

As the author acknowledges the fact that the same sexual propensities may lead to spiritual intercourse—to love, and to physical production—childbirth, and that one function may pass into the other under the influence of consciousness, he naturally not only does not admit of the impossibility of abstinence, but regards it as a natural and necessary condition of rational sexual hygiene in marriage as well as out of it.

The whole article is furnished with a wealth of examples illustrating its arguments and with physiological data regarding the processes of sexual relations; their action and reaction on the organism, and the possibility of consciously directing them into one or the other channel—that of love or production. In confirmation of his idea

the author quotes the words of Herbert Spencer: "If a given law," says Spencer, "contributes to the welfare of the human race, human nature will necessarily subordinate itself to it, so that obedience will become pleasant to man," and, therefore, we must not, says the author, rely too much on the established customs and conditions which now surround us, but rather regard the condition man should and may attain in the brilliant future awaiting him.

The substance of all that has been said the author expresses thus: The fundamental theory of *Diana* is that relations between the sexes have two functions: the productive and the loving; and that the sexual instinct, if only the conscious desire for children is absent, should always be directed into the channel of love. The result of this instinct depends upon reason and habit; and therefore the gradual bringing of reason into conformity with the principle here expressed and the gradual formation of parallel habits, will deliver men from much suffering and give them satisfaction in their sexual propensities.

At the end of the book a remarkable letter to parents and teachers, by Eliza Burns, is given. This letter, notwithstanding that it treats of questions regarded as indecent (calling things by their names—it is impossible to do otherwise), this letter might have so beneficial an influence upon those unhappy youths who suffer from excesses and irregularities that its circulation amongst these youths, so unnecessarily wasting their best powers and welfare, and above all amongst the poor boys in families and schools, and especially in colleges and military establishments, who are perishing merely from ignorance, would be a veritable godsend.

\* \* \* \*

## From the Letters, Diaries, &c.

Concerning sexual intercourse I have expressed my views as well as I could in the *Afterword to The Kreutzer Sonata*. The whole question can be expressed in one word: Man must always, under all circumstances, whether he be married or single, be as chaste as possible, as Christ and after him Paul expressed. If he can be so abstinent as not to know women at all, then this is the best he can do. If, however, he cannot restrain himself he should as seldom as possible give way to this weakness, and in no way look upon sexual intercourse as a pleasure. I think that no sincere and serious man can regard the question otherwise, and that all such men agree in this.

\* \* \* \*

Another letter from the Editor of the *Adult* about free love. If I had time I should like to write about this. Probably I will. The chief thing is to point out that the whole matter lies in insuring to themselves the possibility of the greatest pleasure without thinking of the consequences. Besides this they preach of something which already exists and is very bad. And why should the absence of any restraint mend matters? I am of course against all legal regulations, and for complete liberty: only the ideal is chastity and not pleasure.

\* \* \* \*

All calamities engendered by sex relations, by being in love, arise only from the fact that we confuse carnal lust with spiritual life, and—it is dreadful to say—with love; that we use our reason, not to condemn and restrain this passion but to ornament it with the peacock's feathers of spirituality.

\* \* \* \*

This is where extremes meet. To attribute all attrac-

tion between the sexes to sexual feelings seems very materialistic, but it is on the contrary the most spiritual attitude: extracting from the spiritual sphere everything not pertaining to it, in order to be able to appreciate it to the highest extent.

\* \* \* \*

Passion, the source of the greatest calamities, we not only do not deprecate, constrain—we excite it by every means in our power. And then we complain that we suffer!

\* \* \* \*

Lasciviousness in man or woman is a state of unrest, of curiosity, of desire for novelty (like drunkenness), proceeding from intercourse for the pleasure it gives, not with one but with many. A lascivious person can refrain, but a drunkard is a drunkard, and lasciviousness is lasciviousness; and at the first slackening of the restraint he will fall.

\* \* \* \*

In our struggle against temptation we are weakened by occupying ourselves beforehand with the idea of victory. We set ourselves a task greater than our powers, a task to fulfil or not to fulfil which is not in our power. We, like the monks, say to ourselves beforehand, "I promise to be chaste," implying by this, external chastity. And this is impossible; first, because we cannot represent to ourselves the conditions in which we may be placed, and in which we may not withstand the temptation. And secondly, it is wrong because it does not help to the attainment of the aim—approach towards the greatest possible chastity,—but on the contrary.

Having decided that the object is to preserve external chastity, people either leave the world, fly from women, like the monks of Afon, or else mutilate themselves and overlook the most important point of it all,—the inner struggle with one's thoughts, in the world, amidst temptation. This is just the same as if a soldier were to say to himself that he will go to war, but only on the condition of being certain of victory. Such a soldier would have to avoid real enemies, and to fight with imaginary ones only. He would not learn to fight, but would always be a failure.

Besides this, it is disadvantageous to thus place external chastity before oneself as one's object, with the hope, sometimes certainly, of realising it; because while striving towards it every temptation to which man is subject, and especially every fall, immediately destroys his hopes, forcing him to doubt the possibility and even the lawfulness of the struggle. "It is impossible to be chaste, and I have placed before myself a false aim." And naturally the man gives way altogether and sinks into lust. This is like a warrior who carries a charm which in his imagination insures him against death or injury. At the slightest wound or scratch he loses his last shred of manliness and flies. One's aim can only be the attainment of the greatest degree of chastity corresponding to one's character, temperament, and past and present conditions; and that, not before men who do not know with what we have to struggle, but before ourselves and God. Then nothing interferes with nor arrests advance; then temptation fails even, and everything leads to one eternal aim—leaving the animal and approaching God.

\* \* \* \*

The Christian teaching does not define the forms of life, but only, in all the relations of men, indicates the ideal, the direction; so also in the sexual question. But men of an un-Christian spirit desire the definition of forms. The Church marriage, which has nothing Christian in it, has been invented for them. In sexual intercourse as well as in other things—violence, anger, one cannot and should not lower the ideal, nor distort it. But this is what ecclesiasts have done in relation to marriage.

\* \* \* \*

Owing to not understanding the spirit of Christianity, men are generally divided into Christians and non-Christians. The crudest division consists in regarding the baptised as Christians; but the practice of calling a man who is living a pure family life founded on the teaching of Christ, who is not a murderer and so forth, of calling him a Christian in contradistinction to those who live otherwise,—although less crude is also incorrect. In Christianity there is no line dividing the Christian from the non-Christian. There is the light, the ideal, Jesus;

and there is darkness, the animal. And—advance in the name of Jesus towards Jesus in this way!

So also in the relations of the sexes, the ideal is chastity, complete, perfect. A man who is serving God can desire to marry as little as to get drunk. But on the way towards chastity there are various stages, and the only thing one can say to those who want an answer to the question whether they shall marry or not, is, "if you do not see the ideal of chastity, do not feel the desire to surrender to it, then advance towards chastity (without knowing it yourselves) through the unchaste way of marriage." As I, being of tall stature, and seeing a distant building before me, cannot point it out to the short companion accompanying me, but must show him some other and nearer projection in the way, so honest marriage, for those who do not see the ideal of chastity, is an indication of this kind. But though this may be indicated by me and you, Jesus did not and could not point to anything else than chastity.

\* \* \* \*

To struggle is very life, and in it is life alone. There is no repose. The ideal is always in front, and I am never at peace while, I will not say I have not attained it, but while—I am not advancing towards it.

Take for instance the ideal of celibacy. It is not the satisfaction of the physical which, by abating temporarily the lustful feeling, will satisfy one in this direction, any more than feeding all the hungry around us will satisfy us in the economic sphere. What alone will satisfy us is the clear contemplation of the ideal in all its height, an equally clear contemplation of our weakness and remoteness from that ideal, and the effort to approach it. This alone can satisfy one. Not the placing of ourselves in a position where by shutting up our eyes we can lose sight of the difference between the demands of the ideal and our lives.

\* \* \* \*

The struggle with sexual lust is the most difficult struggle of all, and there is no position or period except early childhood and extreme old age when man is free from it. Therefore one should not be discouraged by the struggle nor expect the attainment of a condition in which it will be absent. One should not for one moment

weaken, but recall and utilise all the measures which disarm the enemy. avoid what excites the body and the mind, and try to be occupied. That is one way. Another is that if you cannot overcome in the struggle, then marry,—that is to say, choose a woman who would consent to marriage, and say to yourself that if you cannot help falling you will fall only with this woman, and with her educate your children should there be any, and with her, supporting her, attain chastity; the earlier the better. I know no other method. Above all, in order to be capable of using both the one and the other means successfully one should strengthen one's connection with God,—remember oftener that one has come from Him and will return to Him, and that all the object and meaning of this life is to fulfil His will.

The more you remember Him, the more will He help you.

One more point : Do not lose heart if you fall. Do not think you have perished,—that after this you need no longer guard yourself but may let yourself go. On the contrary, if you have fallen, then, with so much the more energy must you resume the struggle.

\* \* \* \*

Attacks of sexual lust engender confusion of thought. The absence of thought rather. The whole world darkens. Man loses his relation to it. Chance, blackness, failure!

\* \* \* \*

You have suffered very much poor fellow, from this dreadful passion, especially when you have let it loose and given it headway. I know how it overshadows everything, destroys temporarily all by which the heart and reason live. But the one deliverance is to know that it is a dream, an allurements, which will pass and you will return to true life, to the point at which it seized you. This you can know even during the moments of its power. God help you.

\* \* \* \*

Thou shouldst never forget that thou hast never been and wilt never be completely chaste, but that thou art at a certain degree of approach to chastity, and thou shouldst never lose heart in this approach. In moments of temp-

tation, in moments of fall even, cease not to be conscious of that towards which thou art aspiring, and say to thyself: "I am falling, I hate the fall, and I know that if not now, then later, the victory will not be his, but mine."

\* \* \* \*

It is not the aim of complete chastity which man should put before himself, but that of approach towards it. Chaste, a living man, strictly speaking, can never be. A living man can only strive towards chastity, simply because he is not chaste but lustful. If man were not lustful, there would be for him no chastity nor any conception of it. The mistake consists in putting before oneself the aim of complete chastity (external chastity) and not that of striving towards chastity,—of the inner acknowledgment always and in all circumstances of life, of the supremacy of chastity over dissipation, of greater purity over lesser.

This mistake is very important. For a man who has placed external chastity before himself as his aim, divergence from it, a fall, destroys everything and arrests the possibility of activity and life; for a man who has placed before himself the aim of *striving* towards chastity, there is no fall, no cessation of activity; and for him temptations and falls may not interrupt his *striving* towards chastity, they often even increase it.

\* \* \* \*

. . . When a man knows no other welfare than personal pleasure for himself alone, love—"being in love"—appears a step upward; but having experienced the feeling of love to God and to one's neighbour, having become a Christian, be it in ever so feeble a degree if only the feeling be sincere, one cannot help regarding "being in love," from this higher position, as a feeling from which it is desirable to become free. And why could you not be content with this Christian, brotherly love? And therefore, pardon me, what you say about your love to her supporting you in purity is an insult to woman. Every human being, especially a Christian, desires to be the medium of spiritual, not physical influence. Your purity you should guard with your own powers, but you should offer her your love free from any personal advantages for yourself. Do not exchange God for man; God

will give you incomparably more of what you least expect, and will into the bargain give you her affection.

You write that she must be saved by your love. I do not at all understand "from what?" Nor why and for what you pity her. Amongst us the mistake often occurs that men wish to marry in some special, novel way. As Jesus said and Paul corroborated, and is corroborated also by our reason, "He that is able to receive it, let him receive it,"—and he who cannot, let him marry. And one cannot marry in any new way. One cannot marry otherwise than as all do; that is, having chosen a partner, to decide to be true to him or her, not to forsake until death, and to endeavour with him or her to re-establish the lost chastity. If we do not attach importance to the fulfilment of rites and various customs, we nevertheless cannot understand marriage otherwise than everyone does. And as marriage has always been realised as the natural consequence of *mutual* attraction, so will it ever be. And if this mutual attraction does not exist, then marriage as such is an evil thing.

\* \* \* \*

. . . I think I understand you both, and I should very much like to help you by extracting from your relations all that is painful and disquieting, leaving the good and joyous. She is quite right when she says that exclusive love, far from being love towards God, hinders it. But this exclusive love, the one you feel towards her, is a fact, and a positive fact, with which one cannot help reckoning any more than with the presence of a body and the personal characteristics which we cannot abolish. But while recognising the existence of this fact, one must act so as to accept all that is good in it and throw aside all that is bad. The good is the consciousness of the loveliness of the object of our affection; one loves not egoistically but for the purpose of helping each other to serve God's Cause. This is a joy. But it is first necessary to "sterilize" it well from the exaggeration resulting from the condition of "being in love" (and this is your failing),—from the exclusive exaction this produces, from jealousy, and from all abominations clothed in fine names. My practical advice is, don't dwell on your feelings,

don't communicate them all to each other (this is not concealment but reserve), but write about your life, your common work. As to your loving her exclusively and she you, she knows it and you know it, and therefore you know all the motives of your actions and words. There is a limit to the expression of one's feelings which one should not overstep—and you have overstepped it. And beyond this limit every communication of feeling becomes not a joy but a burden.

Profit by the joy of love which God has given you, without forgetting that it *is* love; that is, the desire of well-being, not of yourself, but of another. And as soon as it is indeed love, that is, the desire for her well-being, then all that was painful in this feeling, both to you and to her, will disappear.

Love cannot be harmful. So long as it *is* love, and not the wolf of egoism in the sheep's coat of love. One need only ask oneself: Am I ready, for his or her welfare, never again to see him or her, to cease relations with her or him? If not, it is the wolf, which should be beaten and killed. I know your religious and loving soul, and am therefore certain that you will overcome the wolf, if such it is.

Yes, one cannot love every one equally. And it is a great happiness to love intensely if it be only one individual,—but the love should be indeed of him or her and not of oneself, not of the delight one experiences in these relations and feelings.

\* \* \* \*

I have often thought of the state of "being in love," and could find no place or meaning for it. And yet its place and meaning are very clear and definite: They consist in lessening the struggle between lust and chastity. "Being in love" must, in the case of youths who cannot endure complete chastity, precede marriage and deliver them in the most critical years—from sixteen to twenty, and beyond — from an exceedingly painful struggle. Here is the place of "being in love." But when it breaks into the life of individuals after marriage it is out of place and obnoxious.

\* \* \* \*

For me the solution to the question whether it is well to be "in love" or not is clear.

If man be already living a human, spiritual life, then being in love and marriage will be for him a fall: he will have to give part of his powers to his wife or family or the object of his love. But if he be on the animal plane, the eating, working, writing plane, then being in love will be for him an ascent, as with animals and insects.

\* \* \* \*

I do not think that you require the society of women, that is, any special spiritual communion with them. Social intercourse with women is good and joyous only when in one's consciousness one does not in any way distinguish them, as regards their sex, from everyone else.

You require, I think, above all,—labour. Some labour which would absorb all your powers.

I liked the pamphlet lately sent me by Alice Stockham about the "creative power," as she calls it. She says that when a man experiences, besides, all his other natural functions, the sexual demand, he should know that it is a creative demand, which expresses itself only in its lower manifestations as sexual lust: it is a creative capacity, and from the will and effort, insistent effort, depends the possibility of transferring it into another physical or, better still, spiritual activity.

I think that it is indeed a power which participates in the work of God, of the establishment of His kingdom on earth: in the generative act it is only the transference to others, to one's children of the possibility of participating in God's work. In abstinence and direct activity in God's service it is the highest manifestation of life. The transition is difficult but it is possible, and it is accomplished before our eyes by hundreds and thousands of people.

If you overcome, it will be well; if you do not, then marry—it will not be so well, but will not be bad.

What is bad is, as Paul says, to be inflamed, to go about imbibing this poison into one's blood.

Only don't trust yourself in imagining that the society of woman contains something especially good, softening. All this is an illusion of sensuality. In the society of woman, as in that of any man, there is much that is

joyous; but in female society as such there is nothing especially joyous; and if it does appear so it is an illusion of sensuality, very covert, but still an illusion of sensuality.

\* \* \* \*

... You ask what aids there are for struggling with passion. Amongst the minor measures such as labour, fasting, the most effective is poverty, the absence of money, the external appearance of destitution; a position in which, it is evident, one cannot be attractive to any woman. But the chief and best means I know of is incessant struggle, the consciousness that the struggle is not an incidental temporary state, but a constant, unalterable condition of life.

\* \* \* \*

... You ask me about the Skoptsi\*: As to whether the opinion that they are bad men is just, and whether they understand rightly the 19th Chapter of Matthew when they mutilate themselves and others on the authority of the 12th verse of that chapter. My answer to the first question is that there are no "bad men," and that all men are the children of one father, all brothers, all equal, neither better nor worse one than another. And judging by what I have heard about the Skoptsi, they live a moral and laborious life. As to the second question, whether they correctly understand the Gospel when they commit this mutilation on its authority, I answer with the fullest assurance that they understand the Gospel wrongly, and that by mutilating themselves and especially others they act in direct opposition to true Christianity. Christ preaches chastity, but chastity, like every other virtue, is of worth when it is attained by an exertion of the will, supported by faith, but not when it is attained through the impossibility of sinning. It is the same thing when a man in order not to overeat produces in himself a disease of the digestive organs, or in order not to fight, ties his own arms, or in order not to use abusive language cuts out his tongue. God has created man as he is, has breathed the divine spirit into his carnal body in order that this spirit shall subordinate the bodily lusts (the

---

\* A sect of Russian peasants who practise self-mutilation to attain chastity.—*Trans.*

whole of human life consists in this) but not that he shall cripple his body to correct God's work.

If people are attracted towards sexual relations, it is to render possible to another generation that perfection which the present has not attained. How wonderful is the wisdom of God in relation to this! Man is destined for perfection: "Be ye perfect as your father in heaven is perfect." A sure sign of perfection is chastity,—true chastity, not only in act, but also in the soul, that is to say, complete liberation from sexual lust. If men were to attain perfection and become chaste the human race would cease and there would be no object for its life on earth, because men would have become like angels, who do not marry, as the Gospels say. But while men have not attained perfection they produce new generations, and these new generations complete themselves and attain what God has commanded, and keep approaching nearer and nearer perfection. Whereas if men were to act as the Skoptsi do, then the human race would cease *without* attaining perfection, and without fulfilling the will of God.

This is one reason why I regard the conduct of the Skoptsi as incorrect; another is that the Gospel teaching produces welfare (Christ says "My yoke is easy and my burden is light"), and forbids all violence to men; and therefore inflicting wounds and suffering, even if it be not to others (which is an evident sin) but to oneself, is a transgression of the Christian law.

The third reason is that the Skoptsi obviously interpret the 12th verse of the 19th of Matthew incorrectly. The whole utterance from the beginning of the chapter concerns marriage, and Jesus not only does not forbid marriage,—he forbids divorce, that is, the change of wives. Thus, even in marriage Jesus demands the greatest possible abstinence—that men should keep to one wife. When the disciples (verse 10) say that it is very difficult so to abstain, that is, to keep only to one wife, he replies that although all cannot abstain as entirely as those who are born eunuchs, nor like those who have been made eunuchs by men, yet there are some who have made themselves eunuchs for the Kingdom of Heaven, that is, have conquered their lust by the spirit, and these are they whom one should endeavour to resemble. That by the words "*such as have made themselves eunuchs for the*"

*kingdom of heaven,"* one should understand the spiritual victory over the flesh and not physical mutilation, is evident from the fact that where physical mutilation is alluded to it is said "*made eunuchs by men,*" and that where spiritual victory over the flesh is mentioned it is said "*made themselves eunuchs.*"

This is what I think, and this is how I understand the 12th verse, but I must add that even if this interpretation of the letter appears to you unconvincing, one should remember that only the spirit giveth life. Compulsory or even voluntary mutilation is contrary to the whole spirit of the Christian teaching.

\* \* \* \*

... I understand that sexual relations in wedlock are immoral, but before writing as with authority, I should like to consider the question more carefully; for there is truth also in the opinion that such relations, even with one's wife, for the mere gratification of lust, is sinful. I think that self-mutilation is as much a sin as physical union for the sake of pleasure, just as I think that it is equally sinful to overeat or to exhaust oneself by starvation or poison. That food for the body which enables man to serve his fellows is lawful, and that sexual union which continues the race is lawful.

Eunuchs are right when they say that sex relations with one's wife is immoral when it occurs without spiritual love, and only for gratification, and therefore not at the right physical periods, and that this is adultery; but they are wrong in saying that sex relations for the birth of children and with spiritual love is a sin. This is no sin, but the will of God.

Mutilation, in my opinion, is something like this: A man has been living a dissipated life, let us say, and has been in the habit of making spirit and beer with his corn and getting drunk; and he has come to feel that this is wrong and a sin. Instead of giving the bad habit up, and learning to use his corn for a good purpose, for the food of men and animals, he has decided that the only way to free himself from his sin is to burn his corn, which he does. The result is, his sin remains within him just the same, his neighbours continue to make beer and spirits as before, but he can no longer feed either his family, himself or others.

It was not without reason that Jesus praised little children, saying that theirs was the Kingdom of Heaven, that the things concealed from the wise and prudent are revealed to them. We know this ourselves: if there were no children, if they ceased to be born, no hope of the Kingdom of God on earth would remain. Only in them have we hope. We are already soiled, and it is difficult to purify ourselves; but here, with every generation, in every family, are new, innocent, pure souls, which *may* remain such. Dim and dirty is the river, but many pure streamlets flow into it, and thus there is hope that the water will be cleansed.

It is a vast question, and I am glad to think of it. I know only that lustful relations and mutilation are equally bad and sinful. But the latter, mutilation, is worse. In sensual practices there is no pride but shame: but in mutilation there is no shame—men are even proud of having suddenly broken God's law to deliver themselves from temptation and struggle. It is one's heart one should castrate; then external mutilation would be unnecessary. But mutilation of one's members will not deliver us from temptation. People are caught in this snare because it is quite impossible to slay in one's heart the sex lust alone—one must destroy all lusts, one must so love God that one hates all the vanities of life. And this is a long road. And here it appears as though, once for all, by a short road, one can liberate oneself from the most evident and humiliating sin. But the pity is that by such short cuts one often does not attain one's destination, but instead falls into a swamp.

\* \* \* \*

Marriage of course is good and necessary for the continuation of the race; but if people marry for this purpose, it is incumbent on them that they should feel in themselves the power of educating their children not to become parasites but the servants of men and God. And for this it is necessary that they have the power of living not by the labour of others but by their own labour—giving more to men than they take.

Whereas we have the bourgeois idea that one may marry only when one has firmly established oneself on other people's necks, that is, when one "has the means." Just

the reverse is wanted. Only he should marry who is able to live and educate his child *without* "having means." Such parents alone can educate their children well.

\* \* \* \*

The sexual instinct is a striving if not to fulfil the whole law, at all events to insure the possibility of its fulfilment by one's descendants. The truth of this is also corroborated in the experience of the separate individual: the more a man approaches the fulfilment of the law the more is he repelled from the sexual passion, and *vice-versa*.

\* \* \* \*

The sexual act is so attractive because it is the deliverance of oneself from an obligation: it as it were frees one from the fulfilment of the law, and transfers this obligation to others. It is not I who will be attaining the Kingdom of God, but my children. This is why women become so absorbed in their children.

\* \* \* \*

With N—— who attacked the ideal of chastity from the point of view of regard for the continuation of the race, I expressed the following: According to the Church belief the end of the world must ensue; so also according to science the life of man on earth, and earth itself, must cease. What is it that so revolts men, then, in the idea of the possibility that a moral righteous life will also bring the race to an end? Perhaps the one and the other will coincide. In a Shaker article this is even suggested. It is stated there, "Why should not men by abstinence deliver themselves from violent death?" Excellent.

There is a calculation of Herschel's by which it appears that if the human population had doubled every year from the beginning, as it does now, then, reckoning 7,000 years since the first pair, the number of human beings at the present time would be so great that if placed one on top of the other on the earth the apex of the pyramid would reach not only to the sun but 27 times that distance.

What are the deductions from this? Only two: either we should admit and desire plagues and wars—or strive towards chastity. Only this struggle towards chastity will counterbalance the increase,

Statistics of wars and plagues compared with those of celibacy would be interesting. They are sure to be in inverse proportions. The fewer destructive agencies, the more cases of celibacy. One counterbalances the other.

Another deduction which involuntarily presents itself but which I am not yet able to formulate clearly is that mental anxiety, calculations about the reduction of human life, are not right. Love only is right; but love does not exist alone but always in connection with purity. Let us imagine a man who is anxious on the one hand to increase the population and on the other to diminish it. Both desires simultaneously would be ridiculous. It would be necessary to take away the life of one being and to produce another at the same time, in such a case!

One thing is rational: "Be perfect, as your Father." And this perfection is in purity and then in love. Deduction: First, purity, then, preservation of the race.

\* \* \* \*

With regard to N——'s letter in which he writes that sexual union is a sacred act, continuing the race, I have been thinking that as man, together with animals, is subordinate to the law of the struggle for existence, so also is he subordinate, like animals, to the law of reproduction. But man, as man, finds in himself another law, contrary to struggle,—the law of love; and one also contrary to reproduction—the law of chastity.

\* \* \* \*

You understand in too narrow a sense the words of the Gospel, "Leave thy father and mother and wife and children and follow me." Concerning the meaning of these words—principally as to how one should solve those collisions and contradictions which occur between family ties and the demands of Jesus, *i.e.*, of truth—I think that the solution cannot come from outside, from rules or precepts, but that each man must solve them according to his powers. The ideal, of course, remains the same, and is expressed by Jesus:—"Leave thy wife and follow me." But the extent to which a man is able to do this is known to himself alone and to God.

You ask what "leaving one's wife" means? Does it mean "forsake her," or "cease to sleep with her and have a family?"

Certainly, to "leave her," signifies that one should act so that one's wife should be to one not as a wife, but as every other woman—as a sister. This is the ideal. And this should be accomplished in a way which does not irritate her,\* is not a stumbling block to her, does not throw her into rancour and temptation. This is very difficult. And every married man striving towards Christian life feels with his heart all the difficulty of healing this wound inflicted by himself. One thing I think and say; and that is, being married, to strive all one's life and with all one's powers to become unmarried without thereby augmenting the sin.

\* \* \* \*

The whole point is in abstinence, in the development, education, of abstinence. The moment men find welfare in abstinence, marriages will diminish.

\* \* \* \*

... One will never succeed if one marries merely to ensure a pleasant life. It is a great mistake to place marriage, that is, union with the person one loves, as one's chief purpose in life, superseding everything else. And if one only considers, it is a self-evident mistake. Marriage as an end? Well, one marries. And what then? If there is no other purpose in life before, then, afterwards, for the two together, it will be terribly difficult, almost impossible to find another. It is even certain that in the absence of a common purpose before marriage, one cannot possibly converge after it, but only diverge. Marriage brings happiness only when the purpose in life of both is one and the same.

Individuals meet on the *same* road and say, "Let us go on together." All right. They lend each other a helping hand.

But when they turn off their separate roads through mutual attraction they do *not* afford help. And this is because the opinion held by many,—that life is a valley of tears, and that held by the great majority, and encouraged by youth, health and wealth,—that life is a place of pleasure, are equally false.

Life is a sphere of service in which one sometimes

---

\* The author of course refers to either sex.—*Trans.*

has to endure much that is oppressive, but oftener to experience very many joys. True joys can be realised only when men themselves regard their lives as a service when they have, outside themselves and their personal happiness, a definite purpose in life. Generally those who marry entirely overlook this. So many joyful events of married life and parenthood are forthcoming, that it appears as if these events constitute life itself; but this is a dangerous mistake.

If the parents live and give birth to children without having a definite purpose, they only postpone the solution of the problem of the meaning of life and that retribution to which those are subject who live without knowing why;—they merely postpone this, but they cannot avoid it, because they will have to educate and to guide their children, having nothing to guide them by. And in such cases parents lose their human qualities and the happiness connected therewith, and become mere breeding stock.

And so I say to those contemplating marriage, that just because their life seems to them so full, they should more than ever consider and make clear to themselves the purpose for which they are living. And in order to elucidate this, one should think, examine well the conditions in which one lives, and one's past, estimate all one deems important and unimportant in life, ascertain what one believes in (that is to say, what one regards as permanent indubitable truth), and what one is willing to be guided by in life. And not only to ascertain and elucidate this, but to experience it as matter of fact, and to realise it in one's life—for while one is not doing what one believes, one does not know whether one believes in it or not. I know your faith; and this faith or those aspects of it which are realisable in deeds, you should more than ever, just now, elucidate for yourselves or put into action: the faith that welfare consists in loving men and being loved by them. —or the attainment of this I know three activities, in which I continually exercise myself, which one cannot exercise too much, and which are at the present moment especially necessary to you.

First, in order to be capable of loving and being loved, one should be accustomed to demand of men as little as possible, because, if I expect much I shall experience

many privations and I shall tend not towards loving, but towards rebuking them. In this respect there is much to be done.

Secondly, to be able to love, not in word, but in deed, one must teach oneself to do to men what is useful. Here there is yet more work.

Thirdly, to enable one to love men and to be loved, one must learn meekness, humility, and the art of enduring unpleasant people and things, the art of always so behaving towards them as to pain no one,—or, if this is impossible, not to insult anyone, to know how to choose the infliction of the lesser pain. And here there is more work still, and continual work, from waking till falling asleep. And a most joyful work, because day after day one is gladdened by one's progress, and besides one receives a recompense, imperceptible at first, but very joyous, in the love from men.

So that I advise you, and both of you, first to think and live as seriously as possible, for only by this means will you ascertain whether you are indeed advancing along the same road, and whether or not it is well for you to join hands; and at the same time, if you are sincere, to prepare for yourselves a future aim. The object of your life should be not the joy of married life, but by your life to introduce into the world more love and truth. And marriage is meant for the purpose of helping each other in the attainment of this object.

"Extremes meet." The most egoistical and offensive life is that of two individuals who have united for the purpose of enjoying life; and the highest is that of men and women who live to serve God by introducing good into the world, and who have for this purpose united.

So take care you do not make a mistake: The one way sometimes resembles the other, but is quite different. Why should not one choose the highest? Only, having chosen the highest, one should put all one's soul into it—a little will be useless.

\* \* \* \*

Every grown individual desirous of living well, should certainly marry; but one should marry by no means from love but from calculation,—understanding these two words however in the precisely opposite sense to that in which they are generally understood.

That is to say, one should marry not from sensual love, but from calculation—not of where and how one is to live (we all do manage to live somewhere and somehow) but, —of how far it is likely one's future partner will help or hinder one to live a human life.

\* \* \* \*

. . . Above all, think twenty times, a hundred times, before marrying. To join one's life with that of another by the sexual link is for a moral sensitive person the most important act and the one most pregnant with consequences, which it is possible to commit. One should always marry in the same way as one dies, *i.e.*, only when it is impossible to do otherwise.

\* \* \* \*

After death, in significance, before death, in time, there is nothing more important, more irrevocable, than marriage. And just as death is only good when it is inevitable, and every intentional death is bad, so also with marriage. Marriage is not an evil only when it is irresistible.

\* \* \* \*

Men who marry when they might avoid it, to my mind resemble those who fall down without previously stumbling. . . . If one has fallen down there is nothing to be done; but why fall on purpose, before being tripped up?

\* \* \* \*

. . . The question of marriage is in itself not so simple as it seems. Falling in love is a deviation in one direction, but cold calculation is a yet worse deviation in another. If, as you say, one should take the first girl, *i.e.*, one should not choose for one's own happiness, then one would have to surrender to that chance fate which governs external phenomena, and to subordinate one's choice to being chosen by another. We cannot act indiscriminately while in complicated and sinful circumstances, for if we violently rend asunder these circumstances instead of disentangling them, we occasion suffering to others. But though feeling can entangle one, theorising may lead one into a yet greater confusion in this most important question. As in everything else in life, one should not place before oneself a particular

object (marriage), but the continual object of a right life; and bear, and wait; and then the time will come and circumstances will so combine that it will be impossible not to marry. In this way it is more certain; one will not commit a mistake, nor a sin.

\* \* \* \*

The conventional opinion about marriage is well known: "If people marry without sufficient means the consequences will be children, destitution, and mutual boredom in a year or two . . . in ten years, quarrels, fault-finding, hell." In all this conventional opinion is quite right, and prophecies correctly, unless those who have married have some other unique aim unknown to their judges. And this aim not a mental one, not accepted intellectually, but representing the light of life, the attainment of which one desires intensely, above everything else. If there is this purpose, it is well, and public opinion will be wrong. But if there is not, the chances are ninety-nine to one that nothing will ensue from such a marriage but unhappiness.

\* \* \* \*

. . . You are united by two things, by your convictions (faith), and by love. In my opinion even one of these is sufficient. Real true union is in human Christian love; if this exist and the sentimental love grows from it, then well and good, the position is firm. If there is only the sentimental love, then, it is not bad, though there is nothing good in it,—but still the position is possible; and with honest natures and great struggle one can exist with such love. But if there is neither the one nor the other but only a pretence of either, then without any doubt the position will be bad. One should be as strict as one can with oneself, and know in what name it is one is acting.

\* \* \* \*

Novels conclude by the hero and heroine marrying. One might *begin* by that and conclude by their unmarried, that is, becoming free (chastity). Otherwise, to describe the life of men and cut short the description at marriage, is like describing a journey and cutting it short at the place where the traveller falls into the hands of thieves.

\* \* \* \*

In the Gospel there are no instructions to marry. There is the negation of marriage, there is opposition to dissipation, to lust, and to the divorce of those who are already married; but to the institution of marriage itself there is no allusion, though the Church asserts it. Nothing except the absurd miracle at Cana, which establishes marriage to the same extent as the visit to Zaccheus establishes collection of taxes.

\* \* \* \*

Yes, I think that marriage is an unchristian institution. Jesus never married, neither did his disciples, and he never instituted marriage; but appealing to men, some of whom were married and others not, he said—to the married, that they should not change their wives (divorce) as they could according to the law of Moses (Matt. v. 32); and to the unmarried, that if they can they had better not marry (Matt. xix. 10-12); and to both he said that they should understand that the chief sin consists in looking on woman as an object of pleasure (Matt. v. 28). (It goes without saying that this should be understood on the part of woman toward man also.)

From this position the following practical moral deductions naturally ensue:—

To believe, not as people do now, that every one, both man and woman, should enter marriage, but on the contrary to believe that for every one, both man and woman, it is better to conserve purity so that nothing shall hinder one from giving all one's powers to the service of God.

To regard the fall of any one, be it man or woman (that is, the entering into physical relations), not, as at present, as a mistake one can correct by entering into new amative relations (in the form of marriage) with another person; or even as a pardonable satisfaction of one's necessities;—but to look upon the first sexual relations with *any one* as the entrance to an indissoluble marriage (Matt. xix. 4-6), enjoining on the pair a definite activity which serves as the redemption from an accomplished sin.

To regard marriage, not as at present, as the permission to satisfy one's carnal lust, but as a sin demanding redemption,

The redemption of the sin consists in both parties liberating themselves from lust, and helping each other in this, and in attaining as far as possible the mutual establishment of the relations not of lovers but of brother and sister ; and secondly, in the education of the children, the future servants of God, which proceed from the marriage.

The difference between such a view of marriage and the one which exists is very great ; people will still continue to marry, parents will still continue to arrange the marriage of their children, but there is a great difference in this when the satisfaction of the body is regarded as permissible, legal, and the greatest happiness in the world,—or when it is regarded as a sin. A man following the Christian Teaching will marry only when he feels he cannot act otherwise ; and having married, he will not addict himself to lust, but strive towards its suppression (man as well as woman) ; parents caring about the spiritual welfare of their children will not regard it as indispensable to marry each one, but will marry them—that is, advise or facilitate their fall—only when the children have not the power to preserve their purity, and only when it is evident that they cannot live otherwise. Those married will not desire, as the case is now, a great number of children, but on the contrary, striving towards purity of life, will be glad they have few children, and that they can devote all their powers to the education of the children they already have, and to those strangers' children whom they can help if they desire to serve God by the education of His future servants.

The difference will be that existing between those who use food only because they cannot get on without it, and who try therefore to spend as little time and attention as possible in its preparation and consumption, and those who place the chief interest of their life in the invention, adaptation, increase of appetite, and consumption of food, as developed to the superlative degree by those Romans who took emetics after one dish to enable them to eat another.\*

\* \* \* \*

A "Christian" marriage there never has been nor can

---

\* Exactly the same is now being done by those who artificially prevent conception.

ther be, as there never has been "Christian" property and much else; but there is a Christian relation to marriage as there is to property.

The relation of a Christian to property is that although I do regard my shirt as mine, yet I deem it necessary to give it up when another demands it; so also towards marriage the relation of a Christian is of such a kind that his union is the most lawful irrevocable marriage, and in this married state he and his wife strive towards two things: first to the best education of their children before God; and secondly, to their mutual liberation from the weakness of lust so far as they are able, and to the establishment of loving-spiritual instead of loving physical relations.

If one only understands well and clearly that sexual intercourse is a moral fall and a sin, and that union with one woman is not, as is now thought, a matter repairable by marriage with another, but is itself an irrevocable union, representing redemption from the sin, then it is clear that only with such a view can the chastity of mankind augment.

\* \* \* \*

... When speaking of how married people should live, I not only do not imply that I myself have lived or now live as I should; on the contrary, I know positively, by my own experience, how one should live only because I have lived as one should not.

I do not withdraw anything; rather, I should like to emphasise all I have said, but it is true it is necessary to explain. Necessary, because in our lives we are so far from what one should be (according to the light of our conscience and to the teaching of Jesus) that the truth in this matter startles us (I know this by my own experience), as it would startle an orthodox merchant who is growing rich if it were suggested to him that one should not accumulate money for one's family, nor erect church bells,\* but should give away all one has, to free oneself from sin.

I will jot down at random all I think about this.

The feeling of being in love—the most powerful over

---

\* Successful Russian merchants are in the habit of presenting peal of bells to their parish church, believing that thus they propitiate God.—*Trans.*

man—exists between two individuals of opposite sexes who have not yet united ; this feeling leads to marriage ; and marriage results in a child. The period of pregnancy begins, and, consequently, the mutual sexual attraction between husband and wife slackens—a slackening which would be very perceptible and would interrupt intercourse, as it does between animals, if men did not regard such intercourse as a lawful pleasure. This slackening is replaced by solicitude for the growth and nursing of the child, and continues until weaning ; and in a good married life (it is in this that lies the difference between man and animals) with the weaning the mutual attraction between the same individuals recommences.

However far from this we may be, it is yet unquestionably what should be. And this is why : First, because sexual relations, when conception is impossible (*i.e.*, when the woman is already *enceinte*) has no rational meaning and is merely a sensual pleasure, and a very bad and shameful one, as every conscientious man knows—an act akin to the vilest unnatural sexual aberrations. Man addicting himself to this becomes more irrational than an animal, for he uses his reason to transgress the laws of reason. Secondly, all know and agree that intercourse weakens and exhausts the individual, and weakens him in the most essentially human activity—the spiritual activity. “Moderation,” the defenders of the present habits will say ; but there can be no real moderation when the laws established by reason are transgressed. But the injury to man by incontinence (and intercourse outside the disengaged period is incontinence) may perhaps not be so great when moderation is observed (how disgusting even to pronounce this word in such a connection !), if a man knows but one woman ; but what is moderation for the husband is terrible incontinence for the wife when with child or nursing her infant.

I think that both the backwardness of women and their hysterical temperament are chiefly attributable to this. It is from this that women should be emancipated, to become one with man, and the servant, not of the devil, but of God. It is a distant ideal, but a great one. And why should not man strive towards it ?

I picture to myself that marriage should be of this nature : A man and a woman unite under the irresistible

pressure of being in love, a child is begotten; and the couple, avoiding all that may disturb the growth and feeding of the child, avoiding all fleshly temptations, and not, as at present, eliciting them, live as brother and sister. (At present it happens that the husband, previously depraved, transmits his habits to his wife, infects her with the same sensuality, and puts upon her the unbearable burden of being at one and the same time a mistress, an exhausted mother; and a sickly, irritable, hysterical individual. And the husband loves her as his mistress, ignores her as a mother, and hates her for the irritability and hysteria which he himself has produced and produces. It seems to me that this is the key to all the sufferings hidden in the majority of families.) And so I picture husband and wife living as brother and sister: She in peace bears her child, uninterruptedly feeds it, training it morally at the same time; and only in disengaged periods do they again allow themselves to be in love, which lasts weeks, and then again peace.

It seems to me that being in love is that steam pressure which would burst the engine if the safety valve did not act. The valve opens only under strong pressure; at other times it is closely, tightly, closed; and our object should be to deliberately keep it closed as tightly as possible, applying as many weights as we can, in the desire that it shall not open. It is in this sense I understand the words "He that is able to receive it, let him receive it" (Matt. xix. 12). That is to say, let everyone strive not to marry, but, having married, to live with one's wife as brother and sister. The steam *will* accumulate, the valves *will* lift, but we should not open them ourselves, as we do when we regard intercourse as a lawful pleasure. It is allowable only when we cannot withhold, and when it breaks through against our wish.

"But how can a man define when he cannot withhold?"

How many questions there are like this, and how insoluble they seem! And at the same time how simple they are when solved for oneself and by oneself, and not for others and by others. For others one knows only a certain gradation; an old man adds to himself familiarity with a prostitute,—dreadfully repulsive; a young man does the same,—less so. An old man sensually courts his wife—repulsive, but less so than a young man with a prostitute,

A young man behaves sensually with his wife—yet less repulsive, though still unpleasant. Such a gradation exists in regard to others, and we all know it very well, especially uncorrupted children, and young people. But for oneself there is yet another consideration: every virginal man and woman has the consciousness (often very dimmed by false views) that purity should be prized, of the desire to preserve it, and of grief and shame at its loss under any circumstances. There is a voice of the conscience clearly saying, both after and always, that this is wrong, shameful. (It all rests on the consciousness, the understanding.)

In the world amative experiences are regarded as very good, just as opening safety valves and letting steam escape might be regarded; but according to God it is good only to live the true life, to employ one's talents for God, *i.e.*, to love men, their souls, and amongst them the first, the nearest—one's wife;—to help her in the understanding of truth, and not to stifle her capacity for receiving it by making her the tool of one's lust. That is to say, to utilise the steam for work and to use all measures to prevent it from escaping.

"But in this way the human race will cease."

In the first place, however instantly people may endeavour to avoid sexual relations, the safety valves will exist while they are necessary, and there will be children. Moreover, why should we lie? When we defend sexual relations are we really anxious about the continuation of the race? We are thinking of our pleasure. And we should say so. The human race will cease? The animal man, will become extinct? What a dreadful thing! The antediluvian animals have become extinct, and so certainly the human animal will (if one considers eternals, and time and space). And let it disappear. I will mourn the disappearance of this two-legged animal as little as I do that of the *ichthyosaurus* &c., as long as true life, the true love of beings, capable of love, does not cease. And this not only will not cease if the human race disappears through men renouncing the pleasures of lust;—it will augment indefinitely to such a degree that the continuation of the race will no longer be necessary to the beings who experience this true love.

Physical love is only necessary for this one purpose—that man shall not cease to have the possibility of developing into these higher beings.

Read all this jumble to guess what I wanted to say, and what I might have said and did not. The thoughts are not accidental,—they have grown out of my consciousness and life, and I will, if God permits, endeavour later to express them vividly and clearly.

\* \* \* \*

Animals allow themselves sexual intercourse only when birth can result. Man, unenlightened, as we all are, is always doing this, and has even invented the theory that it is a necessity. And with this invented necessity he ruins woman by persuading her during pregnancy and nursing into the over-exhausting and unnatural position of being at the same time his mistress. We ourselves have ruined woman's rational nature by this demand, and then we complain of her irrationality or else seek to *develop* her with books and universities. Yes, in all that is animal man has yet to attain, by conscious effort, the animal plane; and this is accomplished by itself when the life of the understanding begins; otherwise, the activity of his reason is directed only to the distortion of his animal life.

\* \* \* \*

The question of sexual relations between man and wife,—as to how far they are lawful,—is one of the most important questions of practical christianity, something like the question of property, and it does not cease to occupy me. And, as is always the case, this question is solved in the Gospel, and, as usual, our life was so far from the solution which Jesus gives, that not only have we been and are unable to apply the Christian solution but we cannot even understand it. Matt. xix, 11, 12. "But he said unto them, all men cannot receive this saying, but they to whom it is given. For there are eunuchs, which were so born from their mother's womb: and there are eunuchs, which made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake. He that is able to receive it, let him receive it."

Why, this passage which has been so much and so falsely interpreted signifies nothing else than that if

man asks what he should do with regard to the sex instinct? towards what he should aspire? in what, speaking in our present language, consists the ideal for man? he answers: To become a eunuch for the kingdom of heaven. And he who attains this will have attained the highest, and he who does not attain it, for him also it will be well that he strived thereunto. He that is able to receive it, let him receive it.

I think that for the welfare of man, he, both man and woman, should strive towards complete celibacy, *i.e.*, he should deliberately seek celibacy, and then that will happen with him which should happen. One should aim above the target to hit the target. If on the other hand man deliberately strives, as is the case among us, towards sexual relations, although in wedlock, then he will inevitably fall into what is unlawful, dissipated. If a man deliberately strive to live not for his stomach, but for the Spirit, then his attitude towards food will be as it should. But if a man beforehand prepare for himself tasteful dinners, then inevitably he will fall into unlawfulness and depravity.

\* \* \* \*

... About married life I have been, and am thinking much, and, which has always been the case with me whenever I have begun to think of any subject seriously, I am stimulated and assisted without.

The day before yesterday I received from America a book by a woman doctor, entitled "Tokology, a book for every woman," by Alice Stockham, M.D. It is an excellent book from the hygienic point of view, and, what is most important, it treats in one chapter of the very subject on which we have been corresponding, solving the question of course as we do. It is very joyful when one finds oneself in the dark to see a light far ahead. For me, in my egotism, it is sad to think that I have lived my life like a brute, and that I cannot now retrieve it,—sad, chiefly because it will be said: "It is all very well for you, a dying old man, to say this, but you have lived differently. When we get old we will say the same." It is in this that the chief retribution for sin consists—one feels that one is an unworthy tool for the transmission of God's will; soiled and spoilt. But then

one has the consolation that others will be as they ought. May God help you and others.

\* \* \* \*

I have been thinking, amongst other things connected with the *Afterword*, that marriage formally meant procuring a wife as property. Again, the relation to women was established by war, capture. Again, man arranged for himself the possibility of satisfying his lust without thinking about the woman: harems. Monogamy altered the number of wives but not the relation to the wife. The true relation is exactly the reverse. Man is always physically capable of the sex relations, and always can abstain. Whereas woman, especially when no longer virgin, abstains with much greater difficulty when her nature demands it normally, which may happen about once in two years. And therefore if one of the two may claim satisfaction it is in no wise the man but the woman. She may demand it, because for her it is not a passing pleasure as for the man, but on the contrary, a surrender to pain, an expectancy of pain in the future: pain, trouble and suffering. I think one should think of marriage in this way: The couple should unite loving each other spiritually; they should promise mutually that if they do have children it shall be with each other only; and the demand for amative intercourse should come from her and not from him.

\* \* \* \*

. . . In the first place, I consider you are quite mistaken in thinking you should not appeal to the father of your children. You write: "I do not want to, and I cannot." But the link between man and woman from whom children have been born is indissoluble, independently of whether this link has been sanctified in an eternal way by an ecclesiastical rite. And, therefore, I think that in whatever position the father of your children may be, whether he be married or single, bad or good, whether he has insulted you or not, you *should* appeal to him and point out, if he has overlooked it, his duty to serve with his life, his children, and his wife. Should he answer this not only with indifference but with contempt and insult, you still are bound before God, before yourself, before your children, and above all, before him, to appeal to him, to

remind him, to entreat him for his own sake, to fulfil his duty, to entreat humbly, lovingly yet persistently, as the Gospel widow did with the judge. This is my well-considered and sincere opinion. You may either overlook it or follow it, but I have felt it my duty to speak it out.

\* \* \* \*

Physical union of husband and wife who are without spiritual affinity is one of the means established by God for the dispersion of His truth ; for trial and growth if strong, and for enlightenment if weak.

\* \* \* \*

I have received your letter and should like to answer correctly your misgivings, which often occur and are indeed unsolved.

In the Old Testament and the Gospel it is stated that husband and wife are not two beings, but one,—and this is true : not because it is supposed to have been said by God, but because it is the confirmation of an unquestionable truth that the union of two beings having as a result the birth of a child, unites these beings in some mysterious way different from all other unions, so that two in a certain respect cease to be two, and become one.

And therefore, I think that this conjoint being (*i.e.*, both of the two, together) can and should strive towards abstinence ; towards the cessation of such relations ; and the one who in this respect is more advanced, should endeavour to influence the other by all the means he or she commands : by simplicity of life, example, persuasion. But until both have united in the same desire they should bear together the weight of the sins of their conjoint being.

Owing to our passions we often commit deeds abhorrent to our best selves, contrary to our conscience ; so in this case we have to commit deeds abhorrent to our individual conscience if we regard ourselves not as separate beings, but as a part of the conjoint being of a married couple. The point is only that as with one's individual temptations, so also in this temptation of the conjoint being, one should not for one minute regard sin as not sin,—one should not cease to struggle.

You are right in saying that there are duties towards

oneself as an image and likeness of God, and that man can not and should not permit the profanation of his body; but this does not refer to those conjugal relations from which there have been or may be children. Childbirth, and the rearing and feeding of children, abolishes the greater part of the weight and wrongfulness of these relations, and besides, for the long periods of pregnancy and feeding, liberates from them.

To argue whether childbirth is a good thing or not, is not our business. He who has established this redemption for the sin of the transgression of purity knew what He was about.

And,—pardon me if what I say appears unpleasant to you,—in what you say about the birth of children rendering one more and more nervous, you manifest an unkind, egotistic trait. You do not live to be gay and well, but to perform the work to which you are appointed. This work, besides all the most important concerns of your inner life, consists in helping your husband to advance in the direction of purity, if you are ahead of him in this matter; and, if you have not yourselves fulfilled all that is required, in giving to the world other beings who will have the possibility of doing so.

Besides, if certain relations do exist between married people, it is obvious that both participate. If one of the two is more passionate, it may appear to the other that he or she is perfectly pure; but this is not correct.

I think it is incorrect in your case also. Only your sin is not apparent to you from behind the more perceptible sin of another. If you were quite pure in this respect you would be more indifferent as to where your husband would seek the satisfaction of his passion—more indifferent in the sense of being less jealous,—and you would only pity him for his failings; but this is not the case.

If you were to ask me for practical advice as to what you should do, I should say: choose the best moment of a pure loving frame of mind in your husband and tell him how oppressive, how painful these relations are to you, and how ardently you desire to free yourself from them. If (as you write) he does not agree with you that purity is good, and insists, then submit, and if you have children, which you should desire, request of your husband

freedom during the whole period before birth and during nursing. And again yield if necessary, and do not trouble about what will come of it.

Nothing can come of it except good for yourself, for your husband, and for your children ; for, acting thus, you will be seeking not your own happiness and peace, but the fulfilment of that which God desires of you

Pardon me if I have said anything amiss. I have tried before God to express what I have lived through and thought over in connection with this question.

\* \* \* \*

Difficult relations with one's husband or wife can be disentangled only by a humble life, as a knot in sewing can be disentangled only by the reel patiently following all the intricacies of the thread.

\* \* \* \*

. . . It seems he is dissatisfied with his married life, regrets his good lawful act, would to God it were not so. Believe me, there are no external conditions good in themselves ; an unreasonable man married to an angel, and another kind of man married to a devil, are equally dissatisfied ; and many, not only many, but almost all who are dissatisfied with their marriage (and they are all dissatisfied), all believe that no position can be worse than theirs. Therefore, the position of all is alike.

\* \* \* \*

If thou lookest upon woman as an object of delight, though she be, and even the more so if she be thy wife, thou committest adultery. Under conditions of the fulfilment of the law of manual labour, marital relations have the object of impersonal pleasure for procuring a helper, a successor ; but in conditions of material ease and superfluity it is only depravity.

\* \* \* \*

. . . The gardener's wife has again given birth to a child. Again the old midwife came and took the child away, no one knows where.

Everyone is dreadfully indignant. The use of measures for the prevention of child-birth doesn't matter,

but for this they have no words of condemnation sufficiently strong.

To day it has become known that the midwife returned and brought the child back. On the way she joined others who were travelling with similar children. One of these children had a teat placed too deep in its mouth. He drew it into his throat and choked to death. In one day twenty-five similar children were taken to the "House for illegitimate children" in Moscow. Out of that number nine were refused either because they were legitimate or ill.

N— went in the morning to admonish the gardener's wife. She, while vehemently defending her husband, said that with their poverty and uncertainty of life she cannot keep her children, and besides she cannot nurse them. In one word—it is inconvenient. . . .

Just before this I had been swinging three children, foundlings. In general the children are swarming everywhere. They are born, grown up to become drunkards, syphilitics, savages.

And at one and the same time people discuss about saving the lives of men and children and about destroying them. But why should one breed savages? What good is it?

One should not kill them, not cease to breed them, but one should use all one's powers to make men out of savages. Only this one thing is good. And this work is accomplished not by words alone, but by the example of life.

\* \* \* \*

If they have fallen they should know there is no other redemption from this sin than (1) to free themselves together from the snare of lust, and (2) to educate children, the servants of God.

\* \* \* \*

My dear M. and N., I am very happy about your marriage. May God give you happiness, peace and love; you require nothing more. . . . But, pardon me, dear friends, I cannot refrain from saying: be careful, both of you; careful above all in your mutual relations, that habits of irritation and alienation do not steal in. It is not easy to become one soul and body. One must strive.

But the recompense is also great. As for the means, I know of one principally: not for one moment to allow one's conjugal love to make one forget, or to dissipate, the love and respect due to each other as *human beings*. The relations as of man and wife must exist—but beyond all, the careful bearing one observes towards a stranger, towards "a neighbour," must remain—this being the essential relation, the pivot.

\* \* \* \*

Do not strengthen your attachment to each other, but with all your power strengthen carefulness, sensitiveness in your mutual relations, to avoid collisions. This is a dreadful habit. Between no one so much as between man and wife, are there such intimate, many-sided relations, and precisely because of this we always forget to think about them, to be conscious of them, as we cease to be conscious of our body. And in this is the mischief.

\* \* \* \*

For a married couple to be happy, as described in novels and desired by every human heart, it is necessary there should be mutual agreement between them. But this agreement is only possible when husband and wife have exactly the same view of the universe and of the meaning of life (this is particularly necessary in relation to the children). And that husband and wife shall possess the same view of life shall stand on exactly the same level of understanding, can happen as seldom as one leaf of a tree can exactly resemble another. Agreement (and therefore happiness), then, is only possible when one of the two subordinates his or her understanding to the other.

And here arises the chief difficulty: The one with the higher understanding *cannot* subordinate him or herself to the lower; however much he or she may desire it. For the sake of agreement one can go without eating and sleeping, one can dig flower beds, etc., but one *cannot* do what one regards as wrong, sinful, and not only unreasonable, but directly opposed to reason and righteousness. Notwithstanding all one's consciousness that the happiness of both depends on agreement—that this agreement is necessary for the right education of the children—a wife cannot agree to her husband's drunkenness or gambling,

a husband cannot consent that his wife shall attend balls, that the children shall be taught dancing, fencing, orthodox theology.

For the preservation of agreement, however, and not only of happiness but of true welfare (which corresponds with love and unity), it is necessary that the one who stands on a lower plane of understanding and feels the superiority of the other, shall submit, not only in the domestic, material questions of what to eat, how to eat, how to dress, to lodge, but in the direction of their lives, in the aim of their activities.

For the happiness, nay, more, for the true welfare of a man and wife, and of the children who live with them, and for the welfare of all near to them, concord is needed; their disunion, their quarrels, are a calamity for themselves and their children, they are a stumbling block for others, they are the most awful hell. And to avoid it only one thing is necessary—that one of the two shall submit.

It seems to me that to the one who feels that his or her partner stands on a higher plane, who apprehends something not quite distinct, but good, Godly—this is always felt—it should be so easy and joyous to submit that one is astonished it is not done.

\* \* \* \*

For agreement between married people it is necessary that in their view of the universe and life, if they do not coincide, the one who has thought least should submit to the one who has thought more.

One should unite the service of men with the service of one's family, not mechanically by distributing one's time between the two, but chemically, by attaching to the care of one's family, the education of one's family, the education of one's children, the ideal significance of service to mankind. Marriage, true marriage, which realises itself in the birth of children, is, in its true meaning, only an indirect service of God, a service of God through one's children. This is why marriage, conjugal love, is always experienced by us as a certain relief, peace. It is the moment of transference of one's work to another. "If I have not done all that I could and should have done, then here I have as my substitutes, my children. They will accomplish it."

But the point is precisely that they should be able to fulfil this, that they should be so educated that they become not hindrances to the work of God, but His labourers; that if I cannot serve the ideal which was before me, I should do my best so that my children can. And this establishes a complete programme and the whole character of education, it gives to education a religious meaning; and this it is that chemically unites into one the best, most self-sacrificing aspirations of youth, with regard for one's family.

\* \* \* \*

I greet the new-arrived Ivan\*. From whence is he? Why? Where to? And who is he? It is well for those for whom "protoplasm" affords a sufficient answer to these questions; but those whom "protoplasm" does not satisfy must necessarily believe that there is a deep meaning in the apparition and life of a newborn child; and this meaning we shall understand just so far as we do our duty in relation to the child.

\* \* \* \*

... Married men should either desert their wives and children and this is inadmissible, or else settle down in one place. This wandering from one place to another must be very painful to the wives, who nearly always (may they pardon me), when they lead a Christian life do so at best, not for God but for their husbands. (And it's very difficult for them, poor things.) And, therefore, I think, one should spare and pity them. Husband and wife have, perhaps, only just succeeded in attaining a certain mutual equilibrium, in feeling firm ground under their feet, and then, suddenly, all the difficulty of a new removal and establishment! This is beyond their strength, and the edifice erected with such labour collapses. I know you will say that one should not live with one's family, should leave one's wife and children, as Jesus has said: but I think that this may be done only with mutual consent, and that there is another word of Christ's and a more binding one: "Man and wife are not two, but one flesh"; and "whom God has joined man shall not separate." Men like you and others, happy and strong,

\* Alluding to a birth in a friend's household. — *Trans.*

should not marry : but, having married and got children, should not put aside what has been done (one cannot wipe out a sin), but should bear its consequences. And I think that to demand or advise husbands to abandon their wives is a great sin. It is true it *appears* that the work of God will gain from the circumstance that without a wife you will accomplish much more than you do now, but very often this only *seems* so. (If you could be completely pure, completely sinless, then this might be so.) One should not demand or advise separation, moreover, because according to this view people who have sinned, *i.e.*, married, would appear to themselves and to others, in a hopeless position ; and this is not good ; I think that sinful and weak men can also serve God.

Once having sinned by marriage one should bear the consequence of one's sin in the best, most Christian way, and not free oneself from this sin by committing another, but in this position should serve God with all one's strength.

\* \* \* \*

Yes, the ideal of Christ's service of the Father is a service which primarily excludes the care of life and the continuation of the race. Hitherto, the attempts to free oneself from those cares has not destroyed the human race. What will happen further I do not know.

\* \* \* \*

I do not like in general to speak of the peculiarities of "our time," but in the relations between husbands and wives, men and women, both rich and poor, in all Christian countries, there is indeed in our day something peculiar. Thus the relations between man and wife are, as it seems to me, spoilt by the woman's spirit, not only of unsubmitiveness, but of animosity towards men ; of arrogance, desire to show that she is not worse than he, that she can do everything he can do,—and also by the absence of moral religious feeling<sup>o</sup>, which is often superseded in woman, even when it had existed, by the maternal feeling.

I think that women are quite equal to men, but as soon

---

\* The Author here and in all other places where he speaks discreditably of women is referring to women of an "unchristian" spirit, as he explains later in this book.—*Trans.*

as they marry and become mothers, a division of labour naturally takes place. The maternal feelings absorb so much energy that there is not enough left for moral guidance, and this guidance is therefore naturally transferred to the husband. So it has been since we have known the world.

At the present time, however, this natural order of things having been abused by the guidance of man establishing itself grossly, by violence - and women having now been emancipated by Christianity . . . . woman has ceased to obey man from fear and has not yet commenced, I do not say, to obey, but, to surrender the guidance to him from the sense that it is better thus, —and a confusion and disarrangement of life has begun, which is apparent in all spheres of society and under all circumstances.

\* \* \* \*

The greater number of the sufferings ensuing from the communion of men and women arise from the complete want of understanding of one sex by the other.

Men seldom understand what children mean to women, what place they occupy in their lives; and yet more rarely does woman understand what the duty of honour, social duty, religious duty, signify for man.

\* \* \* \*

Man can understand, although he himself has neither borne nor given birth to children, that both to bear and to give birth are oppressive and painful, and that this is an important work; but only an exceptional woman can understand that to bear and give birth spiritually to a new life-concept is a heavy and important work. They understand it for a moment but immediately forget it, and the instant their own concerns come forward, be it only domestic matters or dresses, they can no longer remember the reality of men's convictions, and it all appears to them unreal and imaginative in comparison with pies and calicoes.

\* \* \* \*

I was struck by the idea that one of the chief reasons for the inimical feeling between husbands and wives is their rivalry in the conduct of the family.

A woman cannot acknowledge that her husband is intelligent and practical, because otherwise his will would have to be fulfilled ;—and *vice versa*.

If I were now writing *The Kreutzer Sonata* I should bring this to the front.

\* \* \* \*

In the long run those rule over whom coercion has been exercised, *i.e.*, those who fulfil the law of non-resistance. Thus, women are striving for rights, but they rule just because they have been and are subjected to force. Institutions are in the power of men, but public opinion is in the power of women. And public opinion is a million times more powerful than all laws and armies. The proof that public opinion is in the hands of women is that not only is the arrangement of habitations, of food, determined by women, women direct the expenditure of wealth, and, therefore, of human labour; the success of works of art, books, even the nomination of rulers is determined by public opinion, and public opinion is determined by women.

Some one has said that it is men who should strive for emancipation and not women.

\* \* \* \*

An attractive woman says to herself : " He is clever, he is learned, celebrated, rich, he is great, moral, holy ; but for me he is stupid, unenlightened, poor, little, immoral,—he yields to me, therefore intelligence and learning, and everything else, are nonsense." This demoralises and ruins her.

\* \* \* \*

The absurdity of our life comes from the power of women ; the power of women comes from the want of abstinence of men ; so that the reason of the absurdity of life is the non-abstinence of men.

\* \* \* \*

The whole dramatic position of the story (*The Kreutzer Sonata*) which I kept in my mind continuously, is this : He developed her sensuality. The doctors forbade children. She is filled, loaded with sensuality,—

and then came all the temptations of art! How, then, can she help falling? He must know that he himself has brought her to this. That he had killed her already, when he began to hate her; after which he was on y searching for an excuse, and was glad to find one.

\* \* \* \*

If the question is of the husband's liberation by himself from all the cares and labours which follow from the education, or rather the rearing of small children: putting them to bed, washing them and their clothes, preparing their food and the food of the others, sewing their dresses, and so forth, then this is in the highest degree unchristian, unkind, and unjust.

Woman, even as it is, inevitably has the greater share of labour in bearing and nursing the children, and therefore it would seem natural that the man should take upon himself all other cares in so far as it is possible to do so without detriment to his own work, also necessary to the family. And one certainly would do it, if the barbarous custom of shifting all the weight of the work to the weakest, and therefore most submissive, had not become so firmly established in our society. This custom has so permeated our habits that, notwithstanding man's acknowledgment of the equality of woman, the most liberal, the most refined and courteous man will advocate, with all his might, the right of women to become professors, priests; or he will rush to pick up a handkerchief which a lady has dropped, even at the risk of his life, and so forth; but to wash the soiled clothes of their mutual child, or to darn some socks for their boy when his wife is laid up, or tired, or simply desires to read or think a little after all the time she has lost while bearing and suckling the child,—this will not even enter his mind.

Public opinion is so depraved in this respect that such actions would be regarded as ridiculous; and much manliness is required to fulfil them.

And so in this I perfectly agree with you, and am very glad that I do agree, and very thankful to you for helping me to elucidate this matter for myself.

\* \* \* \*

The real emancipation of woman is in this: To regard

no labour as specially woman's work, which one is ashamed of touching, but to help her with all one's strength just because she is physically weaker; to relieve her from the work one can take upon oneself.

In the same way in the education of girls, taking into consideration that they will probably have children, and therefore will have less leisure,—just in view of this to arrange schools for them, not worse but better than for boys, in order that they might beforehand gather strength and knowledge, of which they are capable.

\* \* \* \*

It is quite true that with regard to women and their work many very harmful and time-honoured prejudices exist, and it is yet more true that one ought to struggle against them. But I do not think that a society which organises libraries and institutions for women can be the right one to struggle.

It is not that woman receives smaller wages than man which revolts me—prices are fixed by the quality of the work;—I am revolted by the fact that on woman who bears, then suckles and rears little children, is further loaded the labours of the kitchen—to be roasted at the range, to wash pots, pans, clothes, tables, floors, windows, and to sew. Why is this heavy labour loaded exclusively on woman? A peasant or factory workman, a government official, and every other man, has often nothing to do, but he will lie and smoke, and leave the woman, even if *enceinte*, sick, to roast at the range, to bear the heavy labour of washing, or to nurse throughout the night the ailing child. And all this is done because of the prejudice that there is some special kind of woman's work.

This is a terrible evil, and from hence ensue innumerable diseases of the unfortunate women, the blunting of their faculties and of those of the children, premature old age, death.

\* \* \* \*

Women have always recognised the authority of men. It could not be otherwise in the Pagan world. Man being the stronger, ruled. So it was in the whole world (excluding the doubtful Amazons, &c.), and so it is now amongst '999 of the human race. But Christianity appeared and recognised perfection not in force, but in

love, and thereby liberated all the conquered and imprisoned slaves and women. But to prevent the freedom of slaves and women becoming a calamity it is necessary that the liberated shall be Christians, *i.e.*, shall regard their life as a service of God and man, and not of themselves. Slaves and women however are not Christian although liberated. And they are dreadful; it is they who are the source of all the calamities of the world. What should be done then? Re-convert them to their former slavery? This is impossible because there is no one to do it. Christians cannot subjugate, and non-Christians will not permit it, but fight. Indeed, they do fight between themselves, subjugating and enslaving Christians. What should be done then? Only one thing: to attract men to Christianity, to convert them to Christians. And this can be done only by fulfilling in one's life the law of Christ.

\* \* \* \*

Women who demand masculine work and liberty equal to that of man are generally unconsciously demanding the liberty of license, and in consequence descend to a plane lower than the family one, while imagining they are ascending higher.

\* \* \* \*

I have been thinking a good deal about women and marriage, amongst other things, and should like to express my thoughts. Of course it was not about the little contemporary idols (women's universities, &c.) but of the great eternal calling of women. Much which is perverted is being preached in relation to this, in the very circles of educated women. It is taught, for instance, that woman should not be exclusive—should not love her own children more than others. Much that is misty and confused is preached about her development, her equality with man, but this doctrine that she should not love her own children more than others is always preached, everywhere regarded as an axiom; and, as a practical rule, it includes the essence of the teaching. And yet this very doctrine is completely false\*.

\* \* \* \*

---

\* For explanation of this statement, see next selection.—*Trans.*

\* The calling of every human being,—both man and woman, is the service of mankind. With this general assertion I think all who are not immoral will agree. In the fulfilment of this calling there is a supreme difference between man and woman as regards the means which they employ. Man serves mankind with physical, mental and moral work. The modes of his service are exceedingly various; all the activities of humanity, with the exception of giving birth to and nursing children, represent the sphere of *his* service. Woman, besides her possibility of serving humanity in the same aspects of her being, is by her structure called—inevitably destined—to that service which alone is excluded from the sphere of man's activities. The service of mankind is naturally divided into two parts: one—the increase of the welfare of existing humanity, the other—the continuation of humanity itself. To the former men are called chiefly, as they are bereft of the possibility of serving the latter. Women are called to the latter as they alone are capable of it. This distinction one cannot, one should not, it is sinful (*i.e.* an error) to forget, and to wipe out, as people try to do. From this distinction ensues the duties of both sexes, duties not invented by men, but which lie in the nature of things. From the same distinction follows also the estimation of the virtue and vice of woman and man,—a valuation which has existed in all ages, and exists now, and which will never cease to exist so long as men possess reason.

And the man who has passed his life in masculine, varied work, and the woman who has passed hers in giving birth to nursing and rearing her children,—will always feel, also, that they have done what was right; and they will elicit the respect and affection of mankind because both have fulfilled their indubitable calling. The calling of man is more varied and broad, the calling of woman is less varied and narrower, but deeper. Therefore it has always been and ever will be the opinion that man, having

---

\* It is necessary to mention that this extract as well as others of the same tenor were written by the author *before* the definite elucidation of his view on the sexual relations expressed in *The Afterword to the Kreutzer Sonata*. As to how far one can reconcile the seeming contradiction between his earlier and later views on this question, a few suggestions are offered in the Editorial note to this collection. *Trans.*

broken one or ten or his hundreds of duties, has yet fulfilled nine-tenths of his calling, and remains not a bad not a harmful man. Whereas woman, having three duties, and broken one, fulfils only two-thirds;—having broken two, becomes negative, harmful. This has always been the general opinion, and so it will always remain, because it is the pith of the matter. Man must serve God in the spheres of physical labour and thought, to fulfil His will; by all these activities he can fulfil his calling. But for woman the means of serving God are principally and almost exclusively through her children (because none but she can perform this service).

Only through his work is man called to serve God and men; only through her children is woman called to serve. And therefore, love to one's own children, which is natural to woman, exclusive love, with which it is quite futile to argue, will always, and should always be proper to the mother-woman. This love to her child in its infancy is not at all egoism, as it is erroneously taught; but it is the love of the workman towards the work he is doing while it is in his hands. Take away this love for the object of one's work, and work is impossible.

While I am making a boot, I love it more than anything, as a mother her child. Should anyone injure it, I should be in despair; I love it thus only while I am working at it. When I have finished an attachment remains, a weak and unlawful preference;—so, also, with the mother.

Man is called to serve mankind in multifarious works, and he loves these works while he does them; woman is called to serve through her children and she cannot **but** love these her children, while she is tending them—until they are three, seven, ten years old.

In this I see the perfect equality between man and woman according to their common calling to serve God and man, notwithstanding the difference in the form of their service. This equality is also established in the fact that the one is as important as the other, that the one is unimaginable without the other; that the one determines the other; that for the attainment of the calling both the one and the other require knowledge of the truth; and that without this knowledge the activities of both man and woman become not useful but harmful to mankind.

Man is called to fulfil various works, but all his efforts, his labour (to grow corn or to make guns), his mental work (to alleviate the life of men, or count money), his religious activity (to unite men, or sing Te-Deums), all are useful and fruitful only then when they are accomplished in the name of the highest truth accessible to him.

So also with woman's calling: her giving birth to, nursing, rearing children, will be useful to mankind when she brings up not merely children for her own pleasure, but future servants of humanity; when the education of these children has been undertaken in the name of the highest truth known to her; that is to say, when she has educated her children so that they are capable of taking from men as little, and giving to them as much as possible. The ideal woman, as I conceive her, will be the one who, having assimilated the highest life-conception, life-faith that she is acquainted with, abandons herself to the feminine instincts irresistibly implanted in her mind, and gives birth to, rears and educates, the greatest possible number of children capable of working for mankind according to the life-conception she has assimilated. And this life-conception is not to be found at universities for women,—it is obtained merely by not closing one's eyes and ears, and by the receptivity of one's heart.

Well, and those who have no children, or who have not married, and widows? They will do well if they participate in man's various work. Every woman, when she has accomplished her calling in relation to her children, is able, if strong enough, to help her husband in his work, and such help is very valuable.

\* \* \* \*

The fashion of over-praising women, of asserting that their mental capacities are not only equal but superior to those of men, is a bad and harmful fashion.

That woman should not be restricted in any rights, that the same respect and love should be observed towards her as towards men, that in the matter of rights she is equal to man, all this cannot be doubted. But to say that average women are gifted with the same spiritual power as men, to expect to find in every woman what

you expect to find in every man, is to deceive yourself intentionally, and to do so detrimentally to woman . . . . Expecting this you will demand it, and not finding it you will be irritated, and attribute to ill-will what is really an impossibility.

So that the recognition of woman as she is,—a spiritually weaker being, is not cruelty ; to claim her equality is cruel.

By weakness or lesser spiritual power, I mean lesser subordination of the body to the spirit ; especially—which is an essentially feminine trait,—a lesser faith in the dictates of reason.

\* \* \* \*

A good family life is possible only when the conviction has been instilled into and accepted by woman that she should always submit to her husband. I have said that this is proved by the fact that it has been so since the life of man has been known to us, and that family life with children is a passage in a fragile boat possible only when those in it submit to one individual. And this one has always been recognised as the man, for the reason that neither having nor nursing children, he can be a better guide for his wife than she for him.

"But are women really always inferior to men?" Not at all. Unmarried, they are equals. "But what does it mean that at present women claim not only equality, but supremacy?" Only that the family is evolving, and therefore the previous form is disintegrating. The relations between the sexes are searching for a new form, and the old one is falling to pieces.

What the new form will be one cannot tell, though much is being outlined. It may be a greater number of people adhering to chastity ; it may be temporary conjugal relations which cease at the birth of children, so that both afterwards separate and remain chaste. It may be children educated by society. One cannot see the new forms ; but it is certain that new forms are evolving, and that the existence of the *old* form is possible only when the wife submits to the husband, as it has been everywhere and always, and is yet, where true family life still exists.

\* \* \* \*

Yesterday I was reading Sienkiewicz' *Without Dogma*. Love to woman is very delicately described, tenderly, with much more niceness than French sensuousness, English hypocrisy, or German pomposity; and I thought "it would be well to write a novel about chaste love. . . . A love which has no possibility of passing into sensuality, and which serves as the best protection against sensuality." Yes, may it not be that this is the only way out from sensuality? Yes, yes, it is so. It is for this that man has been created as man and woman. Only with woman can man lose his chastity, and only with her can he keep it. It would be well to write this. . . .

\* \* \* \*

Man, as an animal, submits to the law of struggle, and to the sexual instinct to reproduce the race. As a rational loving, divine being, he submits to the opposite law, not of struggle with rivals and enemies, but of humility, meekness, and love towards them; and not of sexual instinct, but of chastity.

\* \* \* \*

One of the most important aims of humanity is the education of chaste women.

\* \* \* \*

Woman, so the legend says, is the tool of the devil. She is, in general, unintelligent, but the devil lends her his intelligence when she works for him, and lo! she accomplishes wonders of intelligence, of foresight, persistence, in order to do meannesses; but as soon as something which is not mean has to be done she cannot understand the simplest thing, she cannot comprehend anything beyond the present moment, and she has no patience, no persistence (except in childbirth and the care of children).

All this relates to the non-Christian woman, the non-chaste woman. . . . Oh, how one would wish to show to woman all the significance of pure womanhood. The legend of Mary is not without foundation. Chaste women will save the world.

\* \* \* \*

. . . The calling of woman is, before all, and most im-

portant of all, the calling of a human being, of which I spoke. To compare wedlock and family life with celibacy, is like comparing the conditions of country life with those of a town life: the states of celibacy and wedlock in themselves cannot influence man. There is saintly and sinful celibacy, there is sinful and saintly family life.

To a girl, to every girl, and to you especially as a human being in whom the inner spiritual work is beginning, I would give the advice to shun as much as possible all that in our society encourages the idea of the necessity, desirableness, of marriage, and all which disposes towards it: novels, music, idle chatter, dancing, games, cards, even ornate dresses. It really is pleasanter to sew one's shirt (and for one's soul how much more profitable) than to spend an evening at the game of "secretaire" even with the wittiest people. But above all the idea current in society, that it is humiliating for a girl not to get married, to remain a spinster,—this is as completely opposed to the truth, as are all worldly judgments on vital questions. A life kept celibate because good works of a higher standard than marriage fill it—such as all acts of love towards one's neighbours, the cup of water, etc.—is infinitely superior to any married life. "All men cannot receive this saying, but they to whom it is given." (Matt. xix. 11.) And so the question has been regarded by men and women of all nations and all ages, who have shown the greatest respect and sympathy to celibates of both sexes, celibate not because they were obliged to be celibate, but for God's sake. Whereas in our society they are regarded as most ridiculous people. It is just the same with people who are poor for God's sake: those who do not seek to become wealthy. I advise every girl, and you too, to place your ideal in the service of God; that is in the keeping and rearing in oneself of the divine spark, and therefore remaining celibate if marriage hinders this service. But if it so happened that having yielded to the personal feeling towards one man you were to marry, then not to be glad and proud of your position of wife and mother, as is generally the case, but without losing consideration of the chief object of life—the service of God,—to endeavour with all your might that your exclusive and egoistic attachment to your family does not hinder the service of God.

\* \* \* \*

. . . All young men of your age and in your conditions are in a position of great danger. At an age when habits are formed which will remain forever, like creases in paper, you live with no moral or religious restraints, knowing nothing beyond the tediousness of the enforced lessons you try to escape by one means or another, and those various satisfactions of lust which attract you on all sides and are accessible to you. Such a position appears to you quite natural, and it cannot appear otherwise; and you are not at all to blame that it does so appear, because you have grown up in it, and your comrades are similarly placed;—and yet this position is nevertheless quite abnormal and most dangerous. It is most dangerous because if one places the whole object of one's life in such satisfactions, which is the case with young men, whose lusts are new and particularly strong, then, according to the well-known and inviolable law, it will necessarily happen that in order to experience the pleasure to which one has become accustomed, from rich foods, driving, games, clothes, music, one will have to keep adding objects of such lusts, because the same pleasure is not derived on the second and third occasions, after the first satisfaction, and one has to invent new and more exciting forms. (There even exists a law according to which it has been ascertained that pleasure increases in arithmetical progression, whereas the means for producing pleasure must be increased in geometrical progression.)

And as of all lusts the sexual one is the most painful, expressing itself in "falling in love," caresses, self abuse, or the procreative act, one very soon reaches the latter. And then begins the artificial increase of these pleasures by wine, tobacco, sensuous music, when one can no longer substitute something newer and more exciting for them.

This course is so usual that it is followed by most young men, rich and poor (with some few exceptions); if they pull up in time they enter true life more or less injured; if not, they perish altogether, as hundreds of young men have perished before my eyes.

There is only one way of escape from your position: to stop, collect your thoughts, look around, and find an ideal (that is to say, find what you desire to be) and so live as to attain it.

\* \* \*

I have always thought that one of the surest indications of the seriousness of one's relation to moral questions is strictness with oneself in the sex question.

The snare into which N—— has fallen is very comprehensible, and common precisely to such honest and truthful natures as I imagine his to be. Certain relations had established themselves, and he wished to dissimulate nothing, but straightforwardly and openly to acknowledge them, giving them a spiritual character.

I perfectly understand his idea: to profit by that mental upheaval which the state of "being in love" causes, in order to use it for God's work. This is possible, and I think that the energy of people who find themselves in this position may considerably increase, and unexpectedly give apparently great results. I have even more than once seen this, and I know such cases. But in this instance the danger is that when the personal feeling ceases (which is very possible and probable), not only may this increase of energy suddenly collapse, but also all interest in God's work, of which I have also seen examples. And that this happens and may happen proves that God's work, God's service, cannot and should not rest upon any external condition, but on the contrary that all external conditions should rest upon it, upon the consciousness or its necessity and its joy. In the same way one *may* strengthen the energy of God's service by human praise, which is also often done; and again—the same danger of becoming indifferent to God's work as soon as man's approbation ceases.

All this you know and have expressed, but I only wish to add one remark to what I wrote you in my last letter, about my agreeing with N—— that the union between woman and man is good when it has for its object their united service of God and man;—not that conjugal physical union adds powers to this service, but that for certain people possessed by the restless inclination to fall in love it removes this unrest, which hinders the surrender of all one's powers to service; and, therefore, though chastity, if complete, is the most advantageous condition for service, yet for certain people, marriage, by quieting them, by removing an obstacle, strengthens their capacity for service. But in this case,—and this is the

chief thing I wish to say—it is necessary that men should understand and admit both outside and in marriage that the capacity of being in love, and that mental upheaval which takes place at the time,—is destined not for amusement, not for pleasure, not for artistic creation (many think so), not for the increase of energy in God's service,—as N—— thinks ;—but only for physical conjugal union with one husband or one wife for the production of children and mutual deliverance from lust. And directing this capacity to the attainment of anything else will only render more difficult, and not facilitate or sweeten, the way of man's life.

And therefore I perfectly agree with you that this is a most dangerous snare, in relation to which one cannot be sufficiently careful. "Well," it is said, "why not be in friendly relation with people of the opposite sex, in the same way as with people of the same sex?" There is no reason why we should not, and the more we love the better, but a sincere and serious man will immediately remark as N—— did that such relations with women are peculiar. If a man does not deceive himself he will always notice that the mutual approach with women is effected more easily than with men in these cases, that the bicycle is advancing very smoothly and rapidly, not requiring the effort generally needed ; and that there must be a reason for this. And as soon as a morally careful man remarks this, knowing that the propulsion will increase, and bring him to marriage, or exclusive affection,—he will pull himself up if he does not wish to be carried down the hill.

\* \* \* \*

I have looked through the book which advocates the prevention of conception\*.

One cannot write about this and refute it any more than one could with regard to a man who might argue that it is pleasant and harmless to have marital relations with a corpse. To a man who does not feel that sexual intercourse is an act degrading both to oneself and one's partner, and therefore a disgusting act—which even

---

\* In this letter, dated July 11, 1901, the author alludes to a popular English pamphlet advocating methods for preventing increase of family which I sent him to obtain a more explicit opinion on the subject than the incidental references in the foregoing pages.—V.T.

elephants \* are conscious of—by which man pays an involuntary tribute to his animalism, and an act redeemed only when it fulfils the purpose of generation for which this repulsive, humiliating, but at times irrepressible demand was implanted in his nature, to this man, who although capable of arguing yet stands on the plane of an animal, it is impossible to explain or to prove he is wrong.

I leave out of the question the fraudulence of the Malthusian theory which places objective considerations (and fallacious ones at the best), at the basis of an ethical matter which is always subjective. Neither do I mention that between murder, artificial abortion, and this act of frustrating conception, there is no qualitative distinction.

Forgive me—it is shameful and abominable to speak seriously about it. One should rather speak and think about the extent of the perversion or stultification of the moral faculty which has brought men to this; and not *argue* with them, but *treat* them. Why, really, an illiterate, drunken Russian peasant, a victim of the grossest superstitions, who would be horrified at the idea of such an act, and who always regards sexual intercourse as a sin, stands immeasurably higher than those people who can write so admirably and have the audacity to drag in philosophy to support their savagery.

\* \* \* \*

There is no class of human crimes against the moral law which men conceal from each other so assiduously as the crimes called forth by sexual lust;—there is no crime against the moral law which is so common to all, taking possession of men in such varied and dreadful forms;—there is no crime against the moral law of which people have such contradictory views, some regarding certain acts as heinous sins, others regarding the same acts as the most ordinary conveniences or pleasures;—there is no crime in connection with which so much hypocrisy has been manifested;—there is no crime the relation to which demonstrates so clearly the moral plane

---

\* Naturalists have remarked that elephants are distinguished by extreme abstinence in their sexual relations, and that in captivity it is most difficult to breed from them while they feel they are under observation.—*Trans.*

of man ;—there is no crime so ruinous both to individuals and to the progress of all mankind. . . .

\* \* \* \*

These thoughts are very simple and clear for him who thinks for the purpose of ascertaining the truth. Strange, paradoxical, even unjust they appear only to him who argues not for the purpose of ascertaining the truth, but to be able to regard his own life, with all its vices and errors, as right.

\* \* \* \*

This work can never come to an end. Even now I am continually thinking of the same problem, continually feeling that there is much more to be elucidated and added. This is comprehensible, because the subject itself is of such enormous importance and novelty, and one's powers, speaking without false humility, are so weak, and so inadequate to the significance of the question.

I think therefore that all whom this subject strongly interests ought to work ; all should investigate and elucidate this matter according to their powers. If everyone from his own personal point of view would say sincerely what he thinks and feels about this subject, then much which is dark will become clear, things it is the wrongful custom to hide will be disclosed, matters which appear strange because of their unfamiliarity will cease to be strange, and much which appears natural because it is usual to live badly will also cease to appear right. Owing to favourable circumstances I have had more facilities than others to draw the attention of society to this subject. It is necessary that others now shall continue the work, from various sides.

Additional Extracts from Diaries and  
Letters, written during the years  
1900-1908.

THERE is physical love and spiritual love. The carnal love flows from sympathy, from pleasure vaguely realised; spiritual love for the most part, on the contrary, flows from a struggle with one's evil feelings, from the consciousness that it is necessary, that one must not hate, but love. It is nearly always directed towards enemies. The most precious, the best love.

\* \* \* \*

Transitions from a high spiritual raiment of mind to a carnal, base state of mind, are common to all people, and especially frequent with young people. It is important that a man should know which is the real state natural to him as man.

\* \* \* \*

Marriage, of course is good and necessary for the continuation of the species, but if for the continuation of the species, then it is necessary that the parents should feel that they have the strength to bring up the children, not as parasites, but fit to serve men and God. But to attain that end one must be able to live not by the labours of others, but by one's own, giving more than one takes from people. We go by the bourgeois rule that you may marry only when you sit fast upon the necks of the people, *i.e.*, when you have *means*. Just the reverse is required: only he may marry who can live and bring up a child *without having any means*. Only such parents can bring up their children well.

\* \* \* \*

You ask on what is based the rule: "A husband should have one wife, and a wife one husband," and find that departure from this rule may not present anything bad.

Your difficulty is well founded if one thinks of the rule that a husband should have *one wife and a wife one husband* as a religious rule, *i.e.*, a fundamental, absolute rule, not subject to any exceptions. But this rule is not the fundamental religious one, but one deduced from the fundamental religious rule: love for one's neighbour, treating him in the same manner as you would wish to be treated yourself; in the same way as is deduced the rule not to steal, not to be idle, but to work ("he who will not work shall not eat.") All these rules, as well as many others, are the indications of wise religious teachers as to what, in practical life and its varied relations, flows from the fundamental rule. From the material relation flows the rule not to steal; in regard to the modes of making one's living the rule for one to labour one's self, and not to avail oneself of the labours of others; in regard to intercourse between men, the rule not to take revenge, not to retaliate against an offender, but to forbear and forgive; in regard to the sexes, for a man to keep to one wife, and for a wife to keep to one husband.

The religious teacher says that if one acts like that in all these relations it will be well, and better than to act as is customary in the world; that even if there might be cases in which non-adherence to these rules would create no evil at all, it would still be better to follow them, because infringement of these rules has produced, and now produces, numberless calamities. Besides, this very rule is based upon the fact that man, by having one wife, and a woman, by having one husband, draws nearer to the Christian ideal of chastity than if this rule is violated.

I wish you, as a young man, the nearest approach to this ideal and everything truly good, which consists in inner self perfection only.

\* \* \* \*

I think that a man who has entered upon physical connection with a woman cannot, and must not, forsake her, especially when there is or may be a child.

\* \* \* \*

The words in the Gospel about a husband and a wife not being two but one, have a great significance. To break off the connection by marriage, to separate, or to commit an act that might call forth ill-feeling in the spouse: you may only do this when before God and your conscience, you cannot act otherwise.

\* \* \* \*

I think that a man's deserting his wife, who has a child by him, is a bad act, which cannot but have an effect in the shape of a trail of grave consequences, and which are gravest not for the deserted wife, but for the husband who deserts her. It seems to me that you have fallen into the common error that the aim of married life is the augmentation of the amenities of life. It is far from being so. Married life always means a decrease of the amenities of life, because it imposes new difficult duties upon man. The aim of married life, towards which such a strong feeling draws people that man, for the most part, cannot withstand it, is in no case an augmentation of the amenities of life, but the fulfilment by man of one of his callings—the continuation of the species.

\* \* \* \*

...About your son's marriage I can say with full confidence that every kind of marriage is lawful and honourable only to the extent to which those who marry have decided on the mutual obligation to have children only by each other, quite apart from any kind of rites, and carry out the decision.

\* \* \* \*

...You are, as I think, labouring under the customary and very harmful superstition that being in love is something akin to love, and that it is a very good feeling; whereas it is a bad and a very harmful feeling, always painful as to its consequences. One may indulge in it not recognising any religious or moral law, but the recognition of the lawfulness of falling in love is incompatible with the recognition of love as the law of life. Love is only love when it is self-denying, and does not seek its own gratification. And such love you can find in your

wife and this feeling will give you true bliss ; the feeling for the other person, however, if you give yourself up to it, will give you nothing except a lowering of your moral level and the suffering resulting from it.

\* \* \* \*

You think that your chief feeling is the desire to save her ; but in this you deceive yourself. If your chief feeling were that, if you had the general desire to save a human being, and not her in particular, you would have found occasion to apply this feeling apart from her. Your main feeling is your amorousness, which has reached in your case the highest degree of intensity. And, therefore, if you ask my advice, my advice is to break off all relations with her and to try to use all your strength on cultivating love in yourself, not for one person, but for all people, wherein lies the chief work of every man's life.

\* \* \* \*

Sexual relations form one of the chief sources of people's suffering, and especially of evil, and hence from time immemorial humanity has endeavoured to render these relations as harmless as possible, and has established laws, rules elaborated by the wisdom of mankind, violation of which has always been disastrous for the violators. To be guided in this complex, important, difficult matter by feeling alone means to renounce human reason and to lower oneself to the level of an animal. People usually say, "true, sublime moral feeling." But it is unfortunate that everybody sees in his own feeling something particularly sublime, true. It would be well to be guided by feeling if there were a kind of litmus paper such as that by which one can tell an acid from a base, to distinguish the true and sublime feeling from the false and low. There is no such paper, and therefore, if you admit guidance by feeling alone, all kinds of people, considering their own animal feeling as especially sublime, will descend lower than the animal level and sink themselves and their children in the sea of evil.

\* \* \* \*

What can be more abominable than sexual intercourse ? One need only describe this act in detail in order to evoke the most horrible repulsion. And there-

fore all the nations who have emerged from an animal state and entered upon spiritual life, always experience shame at sexual intercourse and its organs. If you ask yourself, why it is so, the answer is clear: in order that man, to the extent that he is a rational spiritual being, should refrain from this act and commit it only on those occasions when he is unable to struggle with the lust that drives him to it. In order that the species should continue as long as it is necessary, a passionate animal tendency to this act is implanted. What a distortion of human nature is the exaltation, the praising up of this act and of the parts of the body wanted for it—all that at the present time the so-called æsthetes and artists do!

\* \* \* \*

Inventions for caressing the five outer senses, such as decorating houses and furniture beautifully, and chiefly dressing stylishly, music, perfume, highly-flavoured food, smooth surfaces pleasurable to one's sense of touch: these are the things that excite lust. Splendour, light, the beauty of the sun, the trees, the grass, the sky, even the sight of the human body without artificial adornments, the singing of the birds, the fragrance of flowers, the taste of simple food, fruits, and the touching of natural objects do not excite lust: it is excited by electric lighting, decorations, finery, music, perfume, gastronomic dishes, smooth surfaces.

\* \* \* \*

Man is gifted with reason and language not in order to invent justifications for his animal lusts, but in order to struggle with them and to intensify and elucidate the demands of reason, and to submit himself to them. The demands of reason in the matter of sexual relations have already shown people long ago that sexual relations, the consequence of which is the birth of children, should be regulated in order that they should not prove the source of the greatest calamities. The simplest and clearest definition of man's duty concerning these relations is that two people of opposite sexes who have joined in an act the consequence of which is the birth of children, should look upon themselves as for ever united with each other,

never permitting themselves relations with other people ; this is called marriage. This is necessary in order to avoid the greatest calamities of all kinds for those who have united, and chiefly in order to make it possible to bring up children.

\* \* \* \*

Human life consists of ceaseless efforts towards liberation from the desires of the flesh. In these efforts lies the bliss of life. The effort is always possible, and the victory of spirit over flesh is always possible. Only he fails to gain victory who does not believe in this. But in order to believe one must know that the meaning of life lies in efforts, and one must experience it.

\* \* \* \*

He who has not fallen must use all his powers in order not to fall, because for him who has fallen it is incomparably more difficult, ten times, a hundred times, more difficult, to struggle with lust than for him who has not fallen. But to struggle, *i.e.*, to strive after chastity, is necessary always and under all conditions (for one married as well as not married). You doubt whether this struggle is indispensable. I understand your doubt because you are surrounded by people who assert with confidence that this struggle is unnecessary and contrary to nature.

Meanwhile one has not to exert one's mind very much in order to understand that for a rational being—man—unrelaxed and continuous struggle with lust is not contrary to nature but forms one of the indispensable conditions of the life of man, who is looked upon not only as animal but as an animal endowed with reason. The animal breeds, but the excess of the increase is neutralised by the struggle between the various species (some serve as food for the others) and by external conditions, to change which is beyond the power of the animals. Man, however, as a rational being can firstly, substitute for struggle rational intercourse with men like himself, and with animals ; secondly, he can counteract external conditions harmful to spiritual life. It is true that man at present does not avail himself of his reason for this purpose, and exterminates those like himself ; and a large number of children and adults perish from cold, disease,

excessive toil. But it is clear that the time will come when people, rational beings, will cease to exterminate each other, and will so arrange their material life that they will not, as at present, double their number in fifty years, will not multiply so quickly that in a few hundred years the globe would not hold them. Kill off the poorest or return to mutual killing? All this is impossible and quite unnecessary. Unnecessary, because "Nature" has implanted in man, together with his sexual, animal inclination, the spiritual tendency towards purity, chastity. This feeling is alive in every unperverted youth and girl, and this is a good, sublime feeling, which man should always guard and strengthen in himself even before his fall, which for a moral man takes the form of marriage; i.e., as an obligation to live always with the same wife—and after marriage, in which this striving after chastity is equally necessary.

So here I have written for you these thoughts as they came to me, which your letter evoked in me. I conclude them with the most hearty advice of an old man to a youth striving after good and truth: guard your purity with all your strength, struggle with temptation, and in no case lose heart, and don't slacken the bridle. You will ask how to struggle? What to do? What not to do? No doubt you know the practical advice, but if you do not know, then read in some rational book about it; not to drink, not to eat meat, not to smoke, not to mix with light-minded comrades, and in particular with light-minded women. All this you know or may learn. My advice is, and I consider it the most important point, to grasp the meaning of one's life, recognising it in the fulfilment of God's will and not in the gratification of one's carnal tastes, to live a more spiritual and not a carnal life.

\* \* \* \*

Chastity is an ideal after which one should always, under all conditions, strive. The nearer you are to realising it the more you—not to say attain a merit before God—attain a greater degree of your own well-being. Man may serve God more by being chaste than by giving himself up to carnal life.

\* \* \* \*

The pamphlet\* is excellent and written in an unusually warm and hearty way; the subject of the pamphlet, as you see, is of immense importance, on which quite a lot has been written, but which until to-day remains unexplained to the large majority. As the French proverb says: "There are no people more hopelessly deaf than those who won't hear." And there is still unfortunately a very large number of such people deaf to the question of sexual abstinence amongst the doctors of the old school (the young doctors for the most part share the view of this pamphlet) who preach debauchery in the name of science.

The author's preface is remarkable. In it he says that his pamphlet was exposed to the attacks of doctors who did not acknowledge his competency in this question; also that the person who sent me the pamphlet could not, in spite of many attempts, place it in any magazine; whereas the thoughts so beautifully expressed in this pamphlet may be of great benefit to young men, who often suffer terribly from want of knowledge as to how to act in this matter, and who often go down in the struggle between the animal desire, stimulated by bad example, and the voice of conscience, which always protests against the subordination of the spiritual desire for purity to the gratification of the lower animal need.

\* \* \* \*

I consider chastity as the greatest good, usually unappreciated by men, and I advise him to retain it with all his strength forever or till marriage, and that as a means for its retention I regard abstaining from everything that intoxicates—tobacco, wine, etc.—shunning the company of unchaste men, and busying oneself with necessary work, or at least work that is attractive.

\* \* \* \*

The more chaste the life is, the better it is. When one has children chastity is still more desirable. If you feel the strength in yourself and wish with all your heart to live chastely as a widow, the best thing you can do is to break the bond and not to marry again; if you do not feel enough strength in you for that, it is better to get married

---

\* "Sexual Life from the standpoint of the Natural History of Development."—Prof. Hclm's "Speech to Young Men."—Ed.

## 88      The Relations of the Sexes

and thus guard yourself against new snares. I would wish very much on your behalf that you chose the first course.

\*                    \*                    \*                    \*

Chastity—the striving after it—a greater degree of it, I consider the most important condition of spiritual life and a sure sign of the sincerity of this striving.

\*                    \*                    \*                    \*

A truly chaste girl, who devotes to serving God and mankind all the powers of maternal self denial which have been given to her, is the finest and happiest human being.

\*                    \*                    \*                    \*

The fault of the women suffragists lies in this : that they want to do everything that men do. But women are beings different from men, with their peculiar qualities, and, therefore, if they want to perfect themselves, to occupy a higher position, they should develop in their own particular direction. What it is I, unfortunately, do not know, and they do not know, but it is true that it is different from man's.

\*                    \*                    \*                    \*

Man must raise himself up to the level of woman's chastity, and not woman lower herself to the looseness of man, as the case is at the present time.

\*                    \*                    \*                    \*

Chastity, if sexual intercourse be permitted under certain conditions (marriage), is not chastity. Love, if resistance to evil be permitted, is not love.

\*                    \*                    \*                    \*

It was not love of women that gave me the brightest period of my life, but love for people, for children.

\*                    \*                    \*                    \*

Morality cannot be prescribed. A moral and good life flows from the religious, metaphysical understanding of life. As always, no aim can be reached by direct striving after it, but always in conjunction with striving after some higher aim. So it is in this case : the consciousness of one's *participation* in the Deity inevitably leads one to a moral life, to moral acts, and to abstaining from immoral ones.

---

# LEO TOLSTOY

## Stories:

PRICE

POPULAR STORIES AND LEGENDS . . . . . 1/-  
(includes "Ivan the Fool," etc.)

WORK WHILE YE HAVE THE  
LIGHT . . . . . 6d.

KING ASSARHADON and other Stories . . . . . 6d.

IVAN THE FOOL . . . . . 4d.

WHAT MEN LIVE BY . . . . . 4d.

THE TWO PILGRIMS . . . . . 4d.

HOW MUCH LAND DOES A MAN  
NEED? . . . . . 3d.

THE OVERTHROW OF HELL . . . . . 3d.

## Essays:

HOW I CAME TO BELIEVE . . . . . 6d.

WHAT I BELIEVE . . . . . 1/-

THE SLAVERY OF OUR TIMES . . . . . 1/3

A GREAT INIQUITY . . . . . 6d.

BETHINK YOURSELVES . . . . . 6d.

THE ONLY MEANS . . . . . 2d.

---

TOLSTOY'S TEACHING: An Epitome  
with a programme of reading, by F. E.  
and C. W. Daniel . . . . . 7d.

---

LONDON: THE C. W. DANIEL COMPANY  
Graham House, Tudor Street, E.C.4

---